

# Islamic Expressions On The Culprits Of Islamic Centers In East Kalimantan

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**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to (1) explore the dynamics within the implementation of religious sermon in the culprit of Islamic Centers and Mosques in East Kalimantan, and (2) to assess how Da'is and the board of Islamic Centers and Mosques construct the concept of Ideal Da'wa; thus, what topics should be promoted and what topics should be avoided. Findings of this paper reveal that the implementation of religious sermons in Islamic Centers in East Kalimantan aims at representing many mosques within the region where the Islamic Center stands. Islamic Center is supposed to play the role model of ideal mosque and every mosque in the region must revitalize its role and functions to become those of the Islamic Center. However, Islamic Centers in East Kalimantan are not successful enough in representing many mosques it claims to represent due to explicit rules on who can and cannot give sermon in the culprit of those Islamic Centers.

**Keywords:**

Islamic Center, East Kalimantan, Da'wa, Religious Culprits.

## Pendahuluan

A religious place within public sphere is one of the most hotly debated topics regarding the discourse of religion in the nowadays multicultural society. The basic characteristic of religion that drives its adherents to become submissive to sets of religious dogmas, in many occasions, clashes with the basic characteristics of public sphere that allows everyone who are competent to provide questions, challenges, and doubts toward the fundamental configurations of the fabric of society.

The term public sphere, historically, emerged as a response towards religion and all its establishments that started to collapse due to its inability to address many crises according to its traditional dogmas. Public sphere, thus, is most of the times identified with the early period of psychological and political liberations brought by religion to the followers.

Many scholars thought that religion would gradually disappear from the life of modern people. It would start from the disappearance of feudalism that served as the most important platforms for the establishment. Democracy, according to many scholars, is the most promising social platform that potentially can replace the position held by feudalism; hence, public sphere is the most important derivative of democracy. Democracy, therefore, can systematically replace the position of religion in society.

The thesis on the disappearance of religion from the people's life along with the tradi-

tional dogmas, in recent decades, is proven to be wrong. Instead of losing grips in the modern society, religion has been proven to be capable of undergoing adaptation in order to fit the requirements demanded by democratic social platform. Religion evolved and became more complex that it was before. Religion, once deemed gone, has come back in a new form and is ready to color the new forms of establishments emerged in the democratic environment.

In Islamic tradition, the re-emergence of religion in the public sphere can be traced back through important terms such as Islamic revivalism, political Islam, fundamentalism, and most recently, Islam and post-Islam. Those terms are reflections of scholars' hard works to understand how Islam has made to be relevant to current modern life which is abounded with the idea of rationalism through cunningly exploit the basic elements of democracy.

Within the discourse of Da'wa, public sphere is closely related to the role of Masjid (mosque) for Muslims. Masjid plays pivotal roles in constructing the religious discourse among Muslims who lives around it. Besides its role as social foundation for the Islamic proliferation, Masjid also plays significant role to unite the Muslim community around it (Syakirin Al-Ghazali, 2018). However, such continuous role of Masjid is supported by several routine activities managed well by the administrators.

In Indonesia, the notions of the emergence of Islam as a new color to paint the current state of the public sphere is essentially inextricably linked to the context of global narratives on the relation between religion and the state in modern society. Inspired by prominent thinkers, mainly from the Middle East, the notion of the ideal position of Islam within the plural context of Indonesian society has been discussed seriously since the early decade of 1960s.

Around the 1980s, such notions of Islam and the state has, arguably, matured yet more grounded discussions around such topics is extremely rare due to the political circumstances in Indonesia during the dictatorial regime of President Suharto. Starting from the dawn of the new millennium in the late 1990s, during the end of President Suharto's presidency, discussions on grass-root level found momentum to grow and spread across the country.

The era of freedom of expression and assembly was marked by the transition from the authoritarian new order in Indonesia towards reformation era; Indonesia has brought about unique challenges to any attempts to place religion in the public sphere proportionally. Such challenges come mainly from awareness that everyone was then allowed to participate in the free market of ideas as the main product of maturing democracy in Indonesia.

In the context of free trade of ideas on the ideal position of Islam within the public sphere, the process of knowledge transmission in the grass root level public is a critical entry to understand the dynamics of institutionalization of religion (Islam) in the relationship with religious phenomena within the plural society on Indonesia. In accordance with it, a number of researches suggest that one of the most important instruments in the process of knowledge transmission in the grass root level is oral traditions in the form of religious sermons through pulpits of the Masjid.

Referring to the elabotation above, this paper aims at providing substantial explanations concerning on the transmission of religious knowledge of Islam in the grass root level in East Kalimantan focusing on the analysis of the phenomenon of Da'wa in the form of religious sermons that take place in Masjid.

## Islamic Da'wa through Masjid' Pulpits: Reflections on the Dynamics of Da'wa in the Contemporary Era

Research of Da'wa as a social phenomenon cannot be put in line with researches on other areas within the scope of Islamic studies. As an area of inquiry, Da'wa lacks strong theoretical foundations. It has been investigated merely as a complementary project to others subject of Islamic studies area such as Islamic law, Islamic economics, politics, and culture. In this regards, the notion of Da'wa is usually reduced in which only the basic definition remains, namely: Da'wa is the act of delivering Islamic teachings and history to other people (Madani, 2017).

The status of Da'wa as an understudied phenomenon comes from a classical dichotomy splitting the subject of Da'wa into two poles, namely Da'wa as a homiletic study and Da'wa as a phenomenon of knowledge transmission that occurs on the laymen level.

As a part of homiletic studies, the notion of Da'wa is not as scientific as other notion within the scope of Islamic studies due to the methodological constraints. The homiletic studies abound with apologetic approaches. The subject of Da'wa, seen from this lens, therefore is understood as a sort of policy paper that revolves around the tendency to produce practical recommendation for Da'i on how to properly conduct the Da'wa in society. The methodological aspects that are central to scientific works become less applied.

The widespread of researches on Da'wa within the notion of homiletic studies is essential to the political situation of the post-colonial Muslim worlds in general, in which Islam is placed as an alternate ideology to tackle the wave of secularization following the process of globalization (Egdunas Racijs, 2004).

In the other notions, researches on Da'wa are discussed within the framework of religious proselytizing and inter-religious dialogue. Both of which are methodologically eclectic. A significant number of works in this notion generally focus on the historical analysis on the coming and growth of Islam in certain communities. Moreover, research on Da'wa within the genre of inter-religious dialogue usually leads to reflections on how to solve contemporary social problems concerning on religious identities in the modern society.

In the last typology of examining Da'wa as mentioned above, Da'wa is generally placed as a tool of analysis to understand a broader structure that allows people to comprehend their agency within the context of wider social relation. With such aim in mind, Da'wa has not been studied as a distinct social phenomenon but as a framework to analyze other social phenomena.

The wide-open gap on the subject of Da'wa as a distinct social phenomenon, however, has still being filled by numerous researches concerning on politics in Muslim worlds, especially after the failure on the experiment to combine socialism and Islam in the Middle East during the early period of post-colonial era. This failed experiment brought huge impact on the course of Da'wa studies. One of the most obvious is the emerging awareness to place Da'wa as an integral part of the process of social movements by utilizing modern social movement theories that has already been matured in western Europe and north America (Bayat, 2005).

A number of recent studies on Islam within the framework of social movement suggest that one of the most crucial strategies to uncover the dynamics of social movements in the Muslim worlds after the failed Islamic project is to place the everyday social practices as a distinct unit of analysis. Investigating everyday social practices as a distinct unit of analysis requires the utilization of microsociology (communication) as an important tool of analysis

that in turn will lead to proportionately understanding Da'wa as a knowledge transmission phenomenon occurred in general public (Tuğal, 2009).

In Indonesia, the awareness to place Da'wa as a subject of inquiry can also be found in many researches regarding such topics as Post-Islam in the Muslim society, especially those regarding Da'wa as a mechanism of vertical social mobilization through utilizing religious capital in the context of the growing urban middle class Muslims in many places in Indonesia.

Furthermore, studies on Da'wa as a phenomenon of religious transmission that occurs on the laymen levels is more likely to be found on research involving the mass media. Regarding the religious transmission happening on the grass root level, researches on Da'wa as a mediated process have few unresolved questions. One of them is the doubts of potential bias to see Da'wa not as an everyday social practices but as a part of greater strategy to commodify religion and sell it to certain groups of Muslims (Sofjan, 2012).

## Islamic Centers in East Kalimantan

Differs from the development of Islamic centers in regions where Muslims are the minority group such as in Europe and North America, the development of Islamic centers in Indonesia did not go through the same trajectory paths as the development of Masjid (mosques) in general. Islamic centers in Indonesia grew as a respond towards an increasing demand from the emerging number of urban from the middle class Muslims to become more Islamic.

In the countries where Muslims are the minority, Islamic centers are built to answer the needs of Muslims for more proper places for communal prayers. This is because the places for communal prayers such as Friday prayers (Jum'ah) and tarawih (evening prayer during Ramadhan) are not enough for the ever-growing number of Muslims. Such condition, along with demographic changes made by the floods of Muslim immigrants seeking for better life in predominantly non-Muslim countries in recent years, has increased the needs for Islamic centers among Muslims community.

In Indonesia, the majority of Islamic centers that exist in the country are built upon in a huge number of Masjid (mosques). Typically, the physical building of a mosque within the complex of an Islamic center is the greatest (in size, architecture, and so on) compared to the already existing mosques in the region. This, in turn, raised the questions such as whether such Islamic center will take over the role of the older "grand" Masjid or it will serve other roles.

Mosques in Indonesia has been assuming the role of community center since the very beginning of Islam in the country (Sukur, 1970). This is not surprising, of course, since the mosques in general have been assuming such role from the beginning of Islam, or since the era of the prophet Muhammad.

## The role of Islamic center

The idea of Islamic center emerged essentially as an effort to provide better places of worship for Muslims, especially in countries where Muslims are the minority such as in North America and European Countries. Besides providing better place for worship for Muslims, Islamic center is also assuming the role of cultural centers since in many non-Muslims countries Muslims are usually the minority ethnic as well.

Islamic center, in the role as cultural hubs also provide social bridges for Muslim communities in the host countries so they can have healthier social interaction with their social environment. Besides that, Islamic center in this context also provides a place for Muslims to

psychologically strengthen each other's due to their social status as the minority.

Differs from the role of Islamic centers in countries where Muslims are the minority according to both religion and ethnicity, in Indonesia, the emergence of Islamic centers is a modern phenomenon that refers to the growing demand for Islamic symbols in public sphere. The growing number of urban middle class Muslims in Indonesia demand for a more Islamic modern public space. This is because the term more Islamic and more modern are two identity constructions that assume central position in the religious aspiration of the relatively new urban middle class Muslims in the country.

The strengthening of Islamic symbols is a relatively new sign in Indonesia, the country where most of the Muslims population in the world is located. Since the beginning, Islamic center is not meant to be a place for worship only. It is of course understandable noting that the mosques have been proliferating since the first time Islam came to the country in the 7th or 12th century. Moreover, Islamic center is more like a manifestation of the idea for revitalizing the role of mosques for the Muslim communities in a modernizing world.

Islamic center building complexes typically consist of the mosques for undertaking religious rituals and other buildings that serve to support the main building or the mosque. In this regard, those buildings usually serve as education center, offices for Islamic organizations, and business/commerce center. All of them should obey certain Islamic code of ethics. The core concepts behind the Islamic center in Indonesia, thus, is the manifestation of ideal vision and missions of Islamic community for a society based on the values believed as Islam (Qadaruddin, Nurkidam, & Firman, 2016).

Despite having multiple functions, the most important role of an Islamic center is to be a center for religious activity. At a glance, it seems like Islamic center can place itself in a diametral position with regard to other currently existing mosques in general. However, a closer look into this phenomenon reveals what Islamic centers' administrators mean by center for religious activities is far beyond the typical current function of a mosque. It means that Islamic center should become a benchmark to evaluate, by providing excellent examples, the success of other mosques in revitalizing their social and religious functions.

## Islamic center in Samarinda

Building area of Islamic center in Samarinda is one of the largest in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, this complex is the second largest after Istiqlal Mosque area in Jakarta. Having oriental architecture, this Islamic center is Samarinda's new landmark and city icon for the people in East Kalimantan.

In the center of this Islamic building area is the Masjid of Baitul Muttaqien. The mosque claims to be capable of accommodating more than ten thousand Muslims at once. It is built upon a hundred and twenty thousand square meters of land. The land belonged to PT Perhutani 1 before it was endowed to the province of East Kalimantan during the 2000s. Prior to the existence of Islamic center, the land was a wood processing station.

It took more than seven years to build this area of Islamic center in the center of Samarinda city. Billions of rupiah from the provincial budget during the period of H. Suwana Abdul Fatah had been spent to fund this project. Symbolically, President Megawati served to be the first person to initiate to project in 2001. After seven years, official ceremony to celebrate the completion of the project was signed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2008.

The masjid of Baitul Muttaqien is located in the main area of the Islamic center of Samarinda as the biggest, greatest and most luxurious mosque in East Kalimantan or even

in Indonesia. It is equipped with seven staggering towers. The height of the main tower is 99 meters tall and four of the other towers at every corner of the area have the height of 70 meters tall. Other two towers on each of the two gates possess the height of 50 meters. This great architecture in terms of size and shape has left the Baitul Muttaqien mosque with no rivals in the province.

To support the vision of Islamic center in Samarinda as not only a center for religious activities but also as a community center in general, the mosque area is also equipped with health clinic, schools, financial service providing sharia compliance services, public halls that can be rented by Muslims, television studio, radio station, and modern public library with multimedia capability. In short, this area resembles an ideal Islamic city to be a reference for everyone who wants to know what it looks like to be in an ideal Islamic city.

## Islamic center in Balikpapan

Islamic center in Balikpapan is officially established in 2007. Soon after the official opening, the Islamic center of Balikpapan became landmark for the city known for the rich oil deposits. The existence of Islamic center in Balikpapan is a bit late considering Balikpapan is a city in Indonesia where a significant number of urban middle class Muslims are located.

The emergence of Islamic symbols in Balikpapan has essentially started for long time. This can be seen through the city's motto that is loaded by Islamic terms. Moreover, most of the historical records of Balikpapan can be traced back to the golden era of the Sultan Sulaiman, the King of Kutai Kartanegara during the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. During this period, Balikpapan was recognized for being Islamic in terms of Islamic symbols in the city's landscape.

During the period of 1981 to 1989, the sixth major of Balikpapan, Colonel Syarifuddin Yoes, had an idea on placing the spirit of religion in the core of its government considering that Balikpapan was inhabited by the people from many different religions, ethnicities, and other social identity markers. The Major believed that only by bringing the social stability, the city could thrive in an environment where the people values mutual respect.

To articulate his vision of a city that is capable of accommodating high degree of heterogeneity without sacrificing religious distinctions of many social groups within, Colonel Yoes came forward with the motto "Balikpapan Kota Beriman" (English: Balikpapan, the city of the faithful). This motto was meant to encourage the people of Balikpapan, which is highly heterogeneous, to coexist peacefully according to their respective faiths. Colonel Yoes believed that regardless of what religion one adhered, as long as one was committed to his/her faith, she/he could contribute positively to the development of the city.

However, the notion of "city of the faithful – Kota Beriman" that once became the slogan of Balikpapan was misinterpreted and was not taken as it was a reminder for the people to become more religious in their life. "Beriman – Faithful" is usually seen merely as an acronym of "Bersih, Indah, Aman dan Nyaman – Clean, Beautiful, Safe, and Comfortable". It was seen merely as a mundane strategy that a government would apply to distinguish their government.

However, the acronym of "Beriman" as a reflection of the eagerness to become modern as well as more Islamic did not satisfy Muslims in Balikpapan. Hence, since 2008, under the initiative made by the City Major, Imdaad Hamid, the city's slogan was polished to become even more Islamic. Balikpapan has transformed from "Balikpapan Kota Beriman" into "Balikpapan Madinatul Iman" ("Click Balikpapan - Di Balik Layar Lahirnya Motto dan Semboyan

Balikpapan,” n.d.). Such transformation in terms of city’s slogan from using Bahasa Indonesia of “Kota Beriman” to using Arabic word of “Madinatul Iman” suggests a strong indication that the City was experiencing the process of the revival of Islamic symbols in Public sphere.

To support this new slogan of Balikpapan as a “Madinatul Iman”, an Arabic term that refers to the city of Madinah during the time of the prophet Muhammad, the city’s middle range development plans of 2016 to 2021 states that the vision of the city is to “Construct Balikpapan a developed and comfortably livable city towards Madinatul Iman”. Explicitly mentioning the vision that the city’s developments in Balikpapan must revolve around the sole purpose of reaching Balikpapan become the city of the faithful (Madinatul Iman) regardless of different views on the concrete manifestation of the concept “Madinatul Iman” itself.

Moreover, in the long-term plan of 2015 to 2025 of Balikpapan, it is stated that in 2025 Balikpapan must “become five dimensions city that excels in services, industry, commerce, tourism, education and culture within the framework of Madinatul Iman”. It is clear from such vision that Balikpapan is indeed serious about implementing the concept of Madinatul Iman. This stated vision is even written on the local regulation (Peraturan Daerah) No. 1 at the year of 2013 to make it looks more comprehensive and integral. (“Pemerintah Kota Balikpapan | Pemerintah Kota Balikpapan,” n.d.).

The Islamic center in Balikpapan, thus, can be seen as an idea emerged within the social and political dynamics as mentioned above. Furthermore, the Masjid of Madinatul Iman located in the center of the Balikpapan Islamic center can also be seen as a miniature of the “pious” vision of the Balikpapan government. This mosque resembles the architecture of the famous mosque of the Prophet (Masjid Nabawi) in Madinah to remind the people and government of Balikpapan about the very purpose of their development (“Masjid Madinatul Iman Terinspirasi Masjid Nabawi, Mimpi Balikpapan seperti Madinah,” 2017).

## Religious sermons in Islamic centers and mosques

Providing proper place to accommodate large scale religious events such as religious sermons is one of the main functions of Islamic centers in East Kalimantan. This is because those Islamic centers are aimed at serving the cause of Da’wa of Islam. On this regard, one of the hotly debated among members of those Islamic centers board revolves the issue of representation. It means that who should be invited to speak on the pulpits on those Islamic centers is a sensitive topic among members of board and thus such issue is hardly discussed openly.

Islamic centers in East Kalimantan are supposed to become “the mother” of all mosques in the region. Thus, selecting and inviting appropriate preachers to deliver religious sermon on the Islamic centers bring unique challenges since the preachers must represent at least a significant portion of the people’s preference over religious affiliation. This is a crucial matter due to that Balikpapan has highly heterogeneous Muslim population.

A slight mistake on representing the nuance of Islamic teaching to be brought forward and displayed on public space provided by the Islamic centers can spell something fatal not only to the people’s perception towards those Islamic centers but also to the social harmony in the region. This is understandable considering the significant influence held by those Islamic centers. These Islamic centers must be able to deliver sermons that reflect the notion of Islam as a religion that brings peace for Muslims and humanity in general “rahmatan lil ‘alamin” (Arsam, 2017) that linked inextricably to the contents of Da’wa of the potential preachers.

As far as we know, until the recently period, these Islamic centers still do not have any

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) concerning on the invitation and assignment of preachers to deliver religious sermons on Islamic centers. Even though several guidelines on this issue are available, they merely cover very general normative aspects to be considered.

As the “mother” of thousands of Mosques in East Kalimantan, religious sermons to be delivered in the Islamic centers in East Kalimantan must be able to accommodate religious diversity within the people of the region. It means that the sermons in the mosques in these Islamic centers should also represent sermons given in thousands of other mosques in the region since those later mosques are considered to be the representation of the diversity of religious affiliation of the Muslim ummah in East Kalimantan.

So far, the management of religious sermons in the Islamic center in Samarinda and in Balikpapan is the privilege of their respective senior members of boards. It means that both in regard to who should be invited and what Da’wa contents should be delivered to the public only reflect the religious vision of those senior members instead of representing the diversity within the Muslim ummah in East Kalimantan.

In the reality, the implementation of religious sermons in Islamic centers on the regions is limited to the religious preferences of the high-ranking members of those Islamic centers’ boards. Aspirations from many boards of Mosques within the region are not proactively taken. Therefore, the senior members of the Islamic center boards willingly accept any suggestions, yet they do it passively. So, for example, when a religious organization or a person recommends a particular preacher for a certain time on the pulpit, then the members of Islamic centers’ board try their best to accommodate them.

One management staff of Islamic center in Samarinda, for example, stated that the preachers who deliver religious sermons in the mosque of Baitul Muttaqien within the Samarinda Islamic Center area usually have sort of personal connections to the senior members of board of the Islamic center of Samarinda. It implies that most of the time the preachers who deliver religious sermons in the Islamic center is not from the recommendations made by the management of the many mosques in the region but from the recommendations made by those senior members themselves.

Similar story is also told by one management staff of Islamic center of Balikpapan who stated that recently there has never been a single case when a member of a mosque management recommends a preacher to deliver religious sermon in the Islamic center where he works.

This situation indicates that the Islamic center, supposed to become a representation of the heterogeneous Muslim population in East Kalimantan, should take the leading role of encouraging the large number of mosques within the region to actively participate in constructing the religious posture of the Islamic center. It is conducted through encouraging those many mosques to participate that the Islamic center can truly become the representation of thousand mosques under its banner.

## Ideal and not ideal sermons in Islamic center and mosques

Strict guidelines regarding the ideal form of religious sermons to be delivered in Islamic centers in East Kalimantan do not include explicitly what content should be included and what content should be avoided. This situation suggests that pulpits for religious sermons provided by these Islamic centers resemble the role of a democratic public sphere in which the general publics are encouraged to become selective of the preachers that they want or do not want to learn. People should actively consider what kind of sermons they want to learn



during the delivery of religious sermons on the Islamic centers.

In Islamic centers in East Kalimantan, preachers also have full freedom to explore the way they want to deliver their sermons. This democratic process provided by the pulpits in these Islamic centers is central to the development of the preachers' career as a full-time religious preacher. Such democratic opportunity, however, can act as both modalities and constraints for them.

However, preference for preachers and what materials such preachers should apply in their sermons remains mysterious. This means even though those preachers or potential preachers have the opportunity to test their preaching styles on the pulpits provided by these Islamic centers, they simply do not implement those aspects because the Islamic centers are considered as the highest level of podiums for delivering religious sermons. The preachers who deliver the sermons in the Islamic centers, therefore, had tested their preaching style on other considered lower ranks podium somewhere else.

The contents of the sermons delivered in Islamic centers can be seen as two structures that strengthen each other. The first structure is religious sermons that the application should follow certain rigid rules. In this first instance, the preachers in East Kalimantan perceive that the materials for religious sermons must be crafted carefully. Furthermore, the materials related to the religion should be handled more carefully than the materials related to the issues of ethnicity (Miftahur Ridho, 2018). The sermons on the Iedul Fitri and Iedul Adha, and the sermons during Friday collective prayers are the examples of sermons that have the rigid procedure in their application. The second structure is religious sermons that do not have strict rules on how to conduct them since they are not considered as an integral part of Islamic rituals such as in the case of the sermons (khutbah) during the Iedul Fitri and Iedul Adha or during Friday collective prayers.

For the sermons within the first context, the ability of a preacher in terms of mastering the procedure of conducting such sermons according to Islamic laws (fiqh) concerning on Islamic rituals serve as a proof to the congregations participants (jamaah) that a preacher has already mastered enough the quantity of Islamic knowledge. In the second context, the preachers are supposed to choose whether to take the podiums presented by those Islamic centers as constraints or as opportunities to develop their career as professional full time preachers.

For both contexts of understanding the pulpits as part of a wider open public sphere for the Muslims, all preachers involved during the writing of this paper agreed that the best possible religious sermons that a preacher can deliver should include materials that is practically beneficial and simply understandable to the congregations or audience.

Contents of religious sermons considered practically beneficial to the congregations, at a glance, seem like an umbrella term that can go beyond any limitation to the original intention. So does the meaning of understandable sermons. As the end-users, the congregations in those Islamic centers reflect a very wide array of people with different level of intelligence, interests, experience and religious affiliation that it is simply too large and it will not easy to fulfill every congregation participant's aspiration by several preachers.

According to the members of these Islamic centers' boards, the materials implemented in the religious sermons delivered by the preachers are as a part of their strategy to manage the religious diversity of the Muslims that serve as the audience. Such diversity can also serve as a double-edge sword. The state of internal diversity within Muslims audience in terms of religious understandings and preferences can be a blessing for the Muslims themselves. Such diverse array of religious understandings and preferences can serve as a catalyst to push those

who feel different to explore and learn more about certain Islamic understandings they feel to be different from theirs.

The spirit to enhance the understanding and gain more knowledge, indeed, comes with large consequences. For Muslims, in order to become more enthusiastic to enhance their Islamic understandings, the effective and efficient strategy is needed to trigger their curiosity to learn new things within the issues of different Islamic teachings and experiences. Muslims as audience in these Islamic centers must be willing to expose themselves to new ideas brought by the preachers who deliver the sermons containing different understandings of Islam. To maintain the balance between the exposure to different views and the speed of which Muslims can understand such differences is another unique challenge for the members of these Islamic centers' boards.

The concept of ideal religious sermons revolves around the idea of sermons that can bring practical benefits to the audiences, according to interviews with the congregations or audience in these Islamic centers. However, presenting practical beneficial for the audience of the religious sermons are not the only middle way to compromise the different religious understanding among the congregations. The concept of practical beneficial sermons as constructed by the boards members in these Islamic centers, however, is the minimum requirement for any religious sermons to be delivered.

The potential preachers in East Kalimantan who want to deliver religious sermons on the podiums provided by Islamic centers, thus, must be able to show and proof that the contents of their sermons can practically benefit to their potential audiences. From the point of view from the potential preachers, this is a challenging requirement because in this situation modalities provided by the Islamic centers can turn into constraints hindering the vertical social mobility during the process of accumulating cultural and social capitals.

Even though a relatively large degree of freedom is granted to potential preachers in terms of materials included in their sermons, the preachers are usually avoiding sensitive topics when delivering their religious sermons. Nevertheless, for the highly popular preacher such as Ustad Abdul Shomad, for example, the limitations regarding the notion of practical beneficial sermons are not to be taken as a crucial consideration since he has a huge fans base nationally.

For the preachers with less accumulated social capitals such as those who are at the beginning of their preaching career, the concept of practical beneficial sermon is usually translated into choosing the topics in order to be unrelated to the politics in their sermons. Islamic teachings regarding insignificant issues (*furu'iyah*) that can potentially incite debates among audiences are also not recommended. Instead, such preachers can usually talk about the principle matters in Islamic teachings such as five times prayers, fasting during Ramadhan, and other topics that have the large degree of agreement among Muslims in general. This unwritten rule on how to conduct religious sermons in the pulpit provided by Islamic centers is not only obvious among the preachers but also among board members of Islamic centers in East Kalimantan.

The second concept of ideal sermon is a simply understandable sermon. The idea of sermons that can be relatively easy to be understood by the congregations attending preaching event in Islamic centers emerged from the same dynamics that give a rise to the first concept of practical beneficial sermon. The differences between these two concepts lie within the aspect of interaction involving the preachers and their audiences while delivering their religious sermons. The first concept of practical beneficial sermon refers to the idea of avoiding sensitive topics that can cause conflict among the audiences such as talking about practical

politics or deviant sects in Islam and so on. In the second concept of understandable sermons, a preacher who delivers religious sermons is required to superficially know the audience in order to measure to the depth of knowledge required to understand what he delivers in his sermon.

Regarding the idea of ideal sermon to be delivered to the audiences in the Islamic centers, popularity of a preacher is a critical importance. For popular preachers with a large and strong fans base, the concept of ideal sermon is not to be taken too serious because such a large base of fans is a proof of people' acceptance toward him and his previous sermons. However, for preachers who are on the beginning of their professional preaching career, all they can rely on to predict the potential responses of the audiences is their previous sermons delivered on the smaller and limited audiences.

In regard to this issue, a board member of Islamic center in Balikpapan stated that certain aspects of preacher such as entertaining, thoughtful, and others, are not to be taken as serious consideration to measure the quality of a preacher. Instead, what matters in regard to measuring the quality of a preacher is his ability to deliver something that the audiences really need to listen and to talk about those matters in a simple and understandable way.

Inability to comply with those unwritten norms regarding the ideal sermons, namely practical beneficial and understandable, can lead to disinvitation and refusal toward a preacher by the audiences. The preachers who fail on this matter will at least get fewer positive responses from their audiences. In this regard, every preacher is required to measure and evaluate his accumulated social and cultural capitals and look for possible ways so that their sermons can gain positive responses from audience.

An example concerning on the failure to balance the social capital of a preacher with the principle of practical beneficial and understandable sermons can be seen in the case of Firanda Andirja, a fulltime preacher in the Masjid Nabawi (the Mosque of the Prophet) in Madinah. This particular preacher was invited to deliver a religious sermon in Islamic center of Samarinda. His fans were confident enough that the public would accept the preacher since he was a permanent preacher in Madinah. However, Firanda was also well known for one of his recorded sermons in which he claimed that the parents of the prophet Muhammad PBUH were infidel and thus were re in hell.

This controversy led to the emergence of massive rally in Samarinda demanding the disinvitation of this preacher to deliver the sermon in the Islamic center of Samarinda. Several representatives of civil society organizations in Samarinda involved in the massive rally to disinvite Firanda Andirja and they stated that the content of this preacher's sermon could lead to clashes among Muslims in Samarinda and East Kalimantan since his sermon was not practical beneficial and was also not easy to understand.

## Conclusion

The existence of Islamic centers in many Muslim countries is part of the awakening of Islamic symbolism onto the public sphere. In Indonesia, this phenomenon linked inextricably to the increasing number of urban middle class Muslims whose religious aspirations are more accommodative to the values of modernity. This dynamic has given a way to the emergence of new type of Muslims that never been found before.

In East Kalimantan, Islamic centers are the landmarks of city where the Islamic center is located. The prestigious construction area of Islamic centers does not take long to change the perception of many Muslims about how Islam deals with modernity, at least superficial-

ly. Islamic centers in East Kalimantan, therefore, are religious symbols aimed at an increase process of re-Islamization of the already Muslim people in the region. These Islamic centers, in Balikpapan and Samarinda, therefore consist of two distinctive building area that represent two different functions; Mosque building area is to represent spirituality, and supporting building complex such as trade centers, hotels, schools, and community centers that represent Islamic modern society.

In Islamic centers in East Kalimantan, even though the number of building that play the role to support the Mosque area of those Islamic centers themselves, the original intention of these Islamic centers as the “mother” of all mosques in the region remain unchanged as the main purpose. It is not an exaggeration to say that all those buildings within the area of Islamic center serve only one purpose that is to support the Mosque in the center of the Islamic center complex.

The implementation of Da’wa in the form of religious sermons on these Islamic centers remains the same as the implementation of Da’wa in mosques in the region. This indicates that even though the mosque within the area of Islamic center is supposed to be the example on how the mosques in the region should operate in terms of revitalizing the social function of mosque, Islamic centers in East Kalimantan are still unable to represent the state of thousands of mosques supposed to be under their umbrellas.

Ideal religious sermons according to the board members of these Islamic centers can basically be understood as two elements that need and complement each other. First, an ideal sermon is one that brings practical benefits to the audience. Secondly, ideal sermon is one that can be understood optimally by the audience.

These two strategies may look superficial at a glance. However, a closer look into these two principles reveals that these strategies can create a healthier social atmosphere where preachers can optimally bring positive impacts to their audiences. The principle of practical beneficial can require the preachers to consider relevant and appropriate topics to be delivered in their sermons due to the fact that culprits provided by these Islamic centers serve as public spaces. The principle of understandable sermons, in other hand, complement the first principle by demanding the preachers to continuously make self-reflection on their position in the dynamic and ever-changing society in which their sermons are supposed to be delivered.

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