

AN ISLAMIC SEARCH OF NOBLE VALUES: The Prevalence of Modern Principles and the Resilience of Local Traditions in Indonesian *Da'wa*

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Abstract

The variety of *da'wa* (Islamic preaching) in Indonesia indicated not only the diversity in Islamic groups and identities, but also the varieties and changes in values and principles embraced by Indonesian Muslims. This paper argued that these *da'wa* activities constitute searches of most suitable Indonesian Islamic principles that inevitably include the negotiation of Islamic, global, and local values. For this purpose, this paper showed examples of various international and Indonesian Islamic scholars and leaders who help change social, political, and religious rhetorical landscape through various arguments involving especially Islamic and modern-international values. This paper maintained that, in addition to Muslims exposure to modern global principles such as democracy and human rights, the increasing popularity and resilience of local-traditional rituals, performances, and expressions in Indonesian *da'wa* have significantly shaped the search of the Indonesian Islamic noble values.

Keragaman dakwah Islam di Indonesia tidak hanya tampak dalam keragaman kelompok serta identitas Islam, tetapi juga dalam varian dan perubahan nilai-nilai serta prinsip-prinsip yang dianut oleh umat Islam Indonesia. Tulisan ini menegaskan bahwa kegiatan dakwah ini merupakan pencarian prinsip-prinsip Islam Indonesia yang paling sesuai yang mau tidak mau merupakan upaya negosiasi nilai Islam, global, dan nilai-nilai lokal. Untuk tujuan tersebut, tulisan ini menunjukkan beberapa contoh ulama dan pemimpin Islam internasional dan Indonesia yang membantu mengubah *landscape* retorika sosial, politik dan agama melalui berbagai argumen yang secara khusus melibatkan nilai-nilai Islam dan modern-internasional. Tulisan ini berpendapat bahwa, disamping Muslim harus berhadapan dengan prinsip-prinsip global modern seperti demokrasi dan hak asasi manusia, meningkatnya popularitas dan ketahanan dari ritual, pertunjukan, dan ekspresi lokal-tradisional dalam dakwah Indonesia telah membentuk pencarian nilai-nilai luhur Islam Indonesia secara signifikan.

Keywords: *da'wa*, Islam, modernity, local-traditional rituals, noble values

A. Preface

It is widely acceptable that we live in an inevitably changing world with rapid exchanges of information, where values and norms about right and wrong or good and bad are continually shaped and reshaped. In addition, throughout human history, each of us belongs to an epistemic community that is ceaselessly in search for truths as well as in negotiation with other epistemic communities in an effort to construct suitable values and standards¹, albeit with differing degrees of success. Perhaps one type of these communities that are often viewed as having non-negotiable convictions in truth and values are religious communities, mostly because their beliefs and values are based on religious teachings or texts typically considered sacred, absolute, divine, and impervious to changes.

Interestingly, migration as well as the intensity of technologically expanded global communication result in unavoidable exchanges of ideas and values among cultures, nations, and groups including the religious ones. In turn, religious groups cannot ignore these exchanges, but pick up those mismatched issues and made them themes of the religious communication, sparking debates and controversies that are reflected in many *dakwahs* (the preaching of Islam).² While local traditional values, at least in Java, have been partly integrated into the Indonesian Islamic tradition, recent global issues such as democracy, human rights, and gender equality with their pros and cons have become popular topics of religious debates and *da'wa* in Indonesia. In facing these modern themes, religious groups are challenged to take a stand and they do so usually by modifying or criticizing previously held interpretations and strategically justifying their modified positions using religious teachings based on selected religious texts. This not only confirms that each group uses religious texts and teachings to justify its own position on controversial issues, but also suggests that each religious group or individual with different backgrounds and motives can potentially be inspired by religious, foreign, or local values, and then creatively justify these inspired ideas using religious texts.³ While these different ideas may create tension and controversies, they may also

¹Richard M. Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

²In this paper "*dakwah*" is loosely defined to include any form of communication through any medium with the purpose of (directly or indirectly) influencing others on any issues related to Islamic faith, texts, teachings and their interpretations.

³Those who agree with this view usually quote a remark by Hassan Hanafi, an Egypt Professor who stated that the Quran "is a supermarket, where one takes what one wants and leaves what one doesn't want." <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=17686>.

contribute too become parts of the changes, preservation, or obtainment of norms and values that might be useful for the future of a better society.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss some kinds of *da'wa* in Indonesia that emphasize not only their identities, but also their creativities in adopting various values and principles embraced by Indonesian Muslims and to argue that these *da'wa* activities constitute the searches of most suitable Indonesian Islamic principles that inevitably include the negotiation of Islamic, global, and local values. For this purpose, this paper will show examples of various international and Indonesian Islamic scholars and leaders who help change social, political, and religious rhetorical landscape through various arguments involving especially Islamic and modern-international values. Based on literature reviews and observations on local Javanese *da'wa* activities, this paper contends that, in addition to Muslims' exposure to modern global principles such as democracy and human rights, the increasing popularity and resilience of local-traditional rituals, performances, and expressions in Indonesian *da'wa* have significantly shaped the search of the Indonesian Islamic noble values.

B. Encountering Modern and Local Values: Different Opinions for Different Interpretations of Islam

Divisions among followers of Islam started not long after the death of Prophet Muhammad when his followers fought each other to be his rightful successors. This later led to continuing conflicts, as shown in the un-ending conflicts between Sunni and Shia factions.⁴ However, divisions among Muslims also develop in the forms of different movements and mass organizations, from the very progressive liberal to the very conservative puritans. In Indonesia, these various groups view their encounters with modern values and local traditions differently, creating an increase in debates through various media on conflicting views as shown in various *da'wa* of diverse groups with different backgrounds and agendas.

The following section discusses Muslims' encounters with western as well as local values, as shown in debates among world's Muslim scholars and leaders. Varieties of arguments that they proposed, while describing and interpreting Islam in the modern world, are part of their search for most acceptable values.

⁴Lesley Hazelton, *After the Prophet: The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split in Islam*, (New York: Doubleday, 2009).

1. Modern Values and Islam

Perhaps, one of the most controversial issues recently picked up by world's scholars of religions as well as religious speakers, including those in Indonesia, is the discourse of the "clash of civilizations," first theorized by Bernard Lewis⁵ and then proposed by Samuel Huntington.⁶ This theory suggests that the conflicts and wars in the world would be due to differences in human religious and cultural identities, the discussion of which is mainly directed at the differences between Islam and the Western values. This has sparked various controversial debates among Islamic scholars and leaders especially concerning the compatibility of Islam with western derived modern values such as democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, and gender and equality.

Despite the debates on these issues, the majority of Muslims have lived in the reality of the modern world, which led Muslims to adjust to changes due to various world events and encounters with different cultures, often creating division among leaders and followers of various Islamic groups with different interpretations of Islamic religious texts. A history of *Quranic* interpretations by Saeed (2005) described that *tafsir* (*Quranic* interpretation) -based on modern thoughts started out around the nineteenth century by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98) of India to reinterpret Islamic teachings and the Quran- was done in response to and constructed on the dynamic changes in values, knowledge, and rationalist thoughts from the West. Then, although similar efforts in the *Al-Ashar* of Egypt were resisted, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) pioneered the interpretation of the Quran in order to deal with the realities of the modern world. Abduh's works that mostly dealt with real life modern needs and challenges of Muslims constituted a significant reform from the traditional approach of *tafsir*.⁷ This was followed by Amin al-Khuli, also of Egypt (1895-1966), who used thematic approach to interpret Quran historically and contextually, an important method which was also employed by late twentieth century commentaries such as Sayyid Qutb (1906-66).⁸

⁵Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim rage." *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1, 1990.

⁶Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: Remarking of Word Order*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996).

⁷J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, (The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1994).

⁸James Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

During the second half of the twentieth century, Fazlur Rahman (1911-88) strengthened this historical and contextual approach by treating the Quran as a unified text. For this, he advocated the implementation of modern hermeneutical methods by broadening the understanding of contexts. Like many of the proponents of the modern interpretation of religious texts, Rahman⁹ emphasized the challenges of the Quran and modern real life worlds. Despite these efforts, there were groups of scholars and leaders that adamantly implemented a strict literal interpretation of the Quran, such as those of the *Salafists* and its militant faction of *Wahabists*. These differences in approach on the interpretation of religious texts and its subsequent implementation in real life have created different factions of Islamic groups throughout the world including in today's Indonesia, oftendisrupting real efforts to discover values and principles that are noble for all humans.

The differences among diverse Islamic factions are reflected in their views of modern values that have affected the way of life of the majority of world's Muslims, maintaining the debates and controversies concerning the compatibility of modern western-based values with Islam. On democracy and Islam, for example, the literature is large and diverse, but perhaps, the best way to sum up the debates on democracy and Islam is to cite the account of Esposito and Voll that "In this complex context, it is clear that Islam is not inherently incompatible with democracy. 'Political Islam' is sometimes a program for religious democracy and not primarily an agenda for holy war or terrorism."¹⁰ This cautious statement suggests that Islam can be compatible with democracy but can also be used to oppose democracy depending on the backgrounds and motives of the proponents.

Typically, the opposition against democracy and human rights can be found in various justification made by conservative and radical Islamic groups and scholars, but the supports for democracy also come from among the Islamic scholars themselves. For example, Sayyid Abu al-A'la Mawdudi (1903-79) and Fethullah Gülen (b. 1941)¹¹, who essentially argued that the basic tenets of Islam can be

⁹Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of Modern an Intellectual Tradition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

¹⁰John L. Esposito & John Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 5.

¹¹John L. Esposito, *Islam and Peace building: Gulen Movement Initiatives*, (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2010).

reinterpreted in a way that can be suitable with western values of democracy, established a proposal that has been followed by a large number of Muslims, defying westerners' common perception of the opposite that is only based on what happened in non-democratic Islamic countries. However, the fact that many fundamentalist and puritan groups maintain the incompatibility of the democratic values and Islam, shows that different camps in Islamic communities throughout the world are in search and negotiation of most suitable Islamic and western-based values.

As suggested by Ramadan¹² Islam has gone through various historical events that have impacted the followers and their views of western-based democratic and human rights values. Thus, even when many still believe that Islam is not compatible with humanistic western values, Muslims throughout the worlds have been embracing and practicing democratic human values be it from the west and controversial or not. This argument is true especially when it comes to Islam in Indonesia, where different groups of Muslims have different interpretations of the -Quran on issues related to new changes in human values, especially those related democracy and equal rights.

2. Modernity and Indonesian Islam

Indonesian Muslims' encounter with western values started most evidently during Dutch colonization and continues to struggle with western-based values even until today, especially concerning democracy and human rights issues. According to Hefner (2000),¹³ democracy has been one of the most debated concepts among Indonesian Muslims such as between secular nationalist leaders, e.g. Soekarno (1901-70) and Islamist leaders, e.g. Muhammad Natsir (1908-93) since the 1930s. Soekarno believed that nationalism is essential for Indonesian unity, while Natsir considered that nationalism could dilute Muslims' faith. This debate continues between secular nationalists and Islamists and is reflected in many media and *da'wa* performances in religious or non-religious occasions. In the mid-1940s, Muslim leaders, e.g. Zainal Abidin Ahmad (1911-83), and also

¹²Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹³Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Natsir, promoted an “Islamic democracy.” According to them, in the verses 159 of the Sura Ali Imran and 59 of al-Nisa, the Qur’an advises Muslims to support the deliberation in the process of making decisions, which is the basis for Muslims to embrace democracy. Even the early caliphate system employed a people’s assembly, succession, deliberation, and social institutions. That is why Natsir formed an Islamic party (*Masyumi*)¹⁴ to join the 1955 general election and more importantly to gain Islamic political power. Since *Masyumi* did not win the election, Muslim leaders and followers recognized the results of democracy and had to live and adjust to the reality of democratic Indonesia which helped shape the kind of Islam in Indonesia today. This, however, does not mean that the motives of those inspired by *Masyumi*’s doctrine has changed; as a matter of fact many current *da’wa* activities including preaching and publication confirms that the motives an identity do not change.¹⁵

After Soekarno’s era, Muslims in Indonesia have been mostly secularized during the Soeharto’s era¹⁶, changing Muslims discourses and political views. This change was supported by Indonesian Muslim intellectuals such as Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009) of NU, Ahmad Syafi’i Maarif (b. 1935) of Muhammadiyah, and Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005) Islamic Student Association and Paramadina University,¹⁷ who have been actively promoting democracy and pluralism to Muslim societies.

Then, with the fall of Soeharto in 1998, Islamists saw an opportunity to revive Islamic ideology and politics in Indonesia. However, after two elections, it was clear that Indonesian Muslims want Islam but not Islamic political power. Due to their defeat, many Islamic parties became open parties; instead of becoming more Islamic demanding implementation of Islamic laws, they became similar to nationalist parties. This development constitutes a learning process where religious groups must adjust to the new reality where, while maintaining the old,

¹⁴*Masyumi* which stands for *Majelis Syuro Muslimin* Indonesia (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations) was a major Islamic political party in Indonesia initially established in 1943 and join but failed to get the majority votes in the 1955 first Indonesian democratic election.

¹⁵Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam...*

¹⁶Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam...*; Bachtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003).

¹⁷Greg Barton, “Pengantar” [Introduction] in Abdurrahman Wahid, *Prisma Pemikiran Gus Dur*, Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2000).

they must bend to the new values of democracy, because democracy teaches, among others, patience, tolerance, fairness, and equality.¹⁸ This adjustment is a significant part of the search for noble Islamic Indonesian values.

A number of Muslim intellectuals mostly affiliated with *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU)¹⁹ and *Muhammadiyah*²⁰ campaigned for progressive Indonesian Islam to have significant roles in enlightening Indonesian Muslims through their flexible interpretations of Islam and appealed Muslims to fully engage in modern challenges. However, Indonesian democracy and other related values face many tests due to increase in radicalism and intolerance. Despite the fact that the major Muslim organizations, NU and *Muhammadiyah*, conceded not to push for Islamic sharia in Indonesia, several fundamentalist organizations continue to fight for it through various *da'wa*. The influx of fundamentalist Muslims groups²¹ including those inspired by *Salafist* and *Wahabist* movements have changed the Islamic landscape of Indonesian struggle for democratic and plural society.²² Despite the Indonesian government's efforts to curb Islamic radicalism, violent and intolerant actions continue to threaten the unity of the country. As Indonesia continues to face the challenges in negotiating and implementing democratic and human rights values, the question that now emerges is whether Indonesia will continue to be a role model for Muslim democracy.

The scholar's caution about the claim that Indonesia has been a good model for Muslim democracy is justified by several reasons. *First*, in this most populous Muslim country, it has not always been mainly about Islam and democracy; it was also about a political transition from authoritarianism to democracy and not from Islamic state to democracy. *Second*, despite their willingness to embrace democracy, many Muslims and Islamic groups, especially the conservative ones, were not bold enough in helping create a democracy that is free of ethnic conflicts,

¹⁸Melzer, Arthur M. Weinberger, Jerry, Zinma, M. Richard, *Multiculturalism and American democracy*, (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1998).

¹⁹NU is a traditionalist Sunni Islam and the largest Islamic mass organization in Indonesia, established on January 31, 1926 as a reaction to the campaign of modernist *Muhammadiyah*.

²⁰*Muhammadiyah* is a modernist and second largest Islamic organization in Indonesia founded in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta as a reformist socio-religious movement.

²¹The well-known fundamentalist groups in Indonesia include, among others: *Majelis Mujahedin Indonesia* (Indonesian Mujahedin Council) (MMI), *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defenders Front) (FPI), *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI).

²²Martin V. Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the Conservative Turn*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

religious riots, and intolerance. Finally, it was, in a way, the failure of Indonesia's Islamic political parties to win the past three general elections that made it easier for Indonesia to maintain a democracy without embracing many Islamic based laws.²³

The fact that there are not many models for democracy in Islamic countries, indicates that democracy and other related western-based values are still at a negotiation stage with Islam in the world as well as in the Arab worlds²⁴ and in Indonesia. Indonesian democracy, like any democracy, is not static, but changing and is being shaped not only by the speeches of the progressive Islamic groups advocating modern liberal values, but also by the fundamentalist Islamic rhetoric and actions of anti-democracy that refuse to engage in civil and rational debates. Still, the existing debates, however uncivil, between the opposing camps that has intensified over the past two decades on various issues –ranging from heretic sects, the adoption of shari'a laws, pluralism and even polygamy and pornography– all constitute not only contestation of beliefs and principles, but also the Indonesian people's search of better human values that cansuitably make Indonesia a just, prosperous, and peaceful pluralistic nation. And in this search,as described in the following section, variety Indonesian Islamic groups still bring in their traditional and local values to help shape the negotiation process in the *da'wa* rhetorical landscape.

3. Local Values and Indonesian Islam

It is well documented that Islam first entered Indonesia by, to a certain extent, integrating its teachings to the local beliefs and traditional rituals, such that Islam in Java is often identified as syncretic Islam. Islam in Indonesia has been changing, but, depending on the groups' positions on local traditional values, some still embrace local values and practice traditional rituals.²⁵ NU is perhaps the most well-known and largest Islamic group in Indonesia that embraces and practices local traditional values including its rituals such as *tahlilan* (traditional feast with

²³Martin V. Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the Conservative Turn*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

²⁴Wissam S., Yafi, *Inevitable Democracy in the Arab World: New Realities in an Ancient Land*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²⁵Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press Monographs of the Association for Asian Studies, 1989), p. 45.

Islamic prayers, usually for the dead, and recitation) and *ziarah* (visits to and prayers on cemeteries).

While these practices have been parts of NU's tenets and identity, some Islamic groups in Indonesia disagree with these practices. As a matter of fact, *Muhammadiyah* (the second largest Muslim organization) was among the first that boldly campaigned through various modern *da'wa* against NU's traditional practices, especially *tahayul* (superstition), *bid'ah* (heretics), *churafat* (believing in bogus legends), also known for its abbreviation, TBC (associated with tuberculosis that needs to be eradicated). Those rituals and beliefs contain values which may or may not be central in Islam and may not be emphasized in universal human values usually described by westerners, but they can be considered beneficial, at least by the Javanese Muslims themselves. The ritual of *tahlilan*, for example, actually has many social benefits, including creating social cohesion and strengthening relationship among the community members.²⁶

Debates on issues of TBC and syncretism can be traced back as early as the times of the *Walisongo* (nine saints), because *Da'wa* in today's Indonesia faced challenges similar to those of the early Javanese Islam. In the efforts of Islamizing Indonesia in Java, the *Walis* (Javanese Islamic saints) had to win the hearts and mind of the Javanese who dearly held their Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and rituals, by adjusting the Islamic rituals and values with those of the local Javanese.²⁷ Not all *Walis* agreed with this approach. For example, Sunan Giri was known for his direct and puritan stand, rejecting the local rituals and culture bluntly. However, other *Walis* such as Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Kudus adopted a compromise approach, allowing the Javanese to practice their rituals, norms and values, although their aims was still a gradual adjustment toward a more pure Islam.²⁸ Sunan Bonang was the one well-known *Wali* for his efforts to use traditional Javanese art performances including gamelan, Javanese *tembang* (songs), and *wayang* (Javanese shadow puppet plays) in spreading the teachings of Islam. This type of *da'wa* inevitably constitutes an appreciation of the Javanese local values contained in the cultural performances of traditional rituals.

²⁶Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java:...*

²⁷Van Dijk, K., *Da'wa and Indigeneous Culture: The Dissemination of Islam. Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land-en Volkenkunde, Globalization, Localization and Indonesia*, 154, 2, 1998 pp. 218- 235.

²⁸Umar Hasyim, *Sunan Giri*, (Kudus: Menara Kudus, 1979); Nur Amien Fattah, *Metode Dakwah*, (Pekalongan: Bahagia, 1985).

Despite continuous rejection of this kind of *da'wa*, because it can be considered TBC, and despite the rise in conservatism and fundamentalism²⁹, there have been various forms of Javanese vernacular *da'wa*, using local languages and traditional arts performances, that recently gain in popularity. This confirms Van Dijk's arguments that the Indonesian people are resilient to drastic changes due to influence from the western values as well as from Arab culture of Islam, such that Indonesians, who seemed to have conformed toward the western norms and values or have become devout Muslims, continue to be attached to their own local identities and tradition.

This argument is supported by the popularity of Javanese *da'wa* speakers called *kyai*³⁰ (but also often called *ustad*³¹) who employ Javanese traditional performances.³² My collection of video recordings for the past ten years show that there is an increasing popularity of local or vernacular *da'wa*; that is *da'wa* that employs not only local languages but also local narratives containing cultural norms and standards justified by Islamic teachings. The *da'wa* is usually delivered in a form of *pengajian* (Islamic religious gathering) or *tahlilan* and those usually performed to celebrate traditional ritual of weddings and circumcisions, national days such as independent day, as well as Islamic religious festivities such as *Muludan* (commemoration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad). This kind of *da'wa* is a religious as well as a traditional event. It is religious because the *kyai* or *ustad* recites *Quranic* verses and do prayers in Arabic but always translates them into Javanese and carries out the speeches in Javanese with reference to daily local life events.

This vernacular *da'wa* typically starts rather informally with singings by a group of singers accompanied by a music ensemble of Arabic-middle eastern, western, and local traditional instruments. The real *da'wa* performance begins when the main speaker arrives, who then addresses the audience and starts with

²⁹Van Dijk, K., *Da'wa and Indigeneous Culture...*

³⁰*Kyai* or *Kiai* used to refer to the head master or director of Islamic boarding school that now is also used to refer to any Islamic *dakwah* speakers or teachers with many followings.

³¹*Ustad* is used to refer to Arabic and Islamic teachers in mosques, but recently have also been used for any Islamic preachers.

³²There are various kinds of *dakwah* activities and performances in different media including sermons during mosque prayers, cyber *dakwah*, as well as performances in radios and televisions mostly conveyed in Indonesian language, but this study only focuses *dakwah* by Javanese *Kyai* using mostly Javanese and some Indonesian.

brief *Quranic* reading and/or prayers. A formal recitation of the *Quranic* verses is usually done by a different reader, before the *da'wa* speaker begins with his formal preaching, starting with readings from the Quran. From here on, the speaker can speak formally or informally in a local language often with intermission by the music including the singers and sometimes together with the audience.

The most common topics during this *da'wa* are suggestions to be thankful to Allah and be disciplined in conducting *salat* (five daily Islamic prayer rituals), as well as *amar mar'uf nahi munkar* (do the right and avoid the wrong) and reminders of heaven and hell during the afterlife. In addition to these commonly mentioned themes, much time is spent for entertaining, like a standup comedy, when the *kyai* or *ustad*, using colloquial Javanese, talk about real daily life situations that call for certain actions and reactions, producing anecdotes that create jokes usually followed by laughter from the audience.³³

This is not only the most entertaining parts of the performance, but also the parts when the audience can make a close connection with the *kyai*, when, although the jokes can sometimes be slightly dirty, the vernacular anecdotes portray local values embraced and considered noble by the locals. The *kyai* usually convinced the audience of the suitability of these values with Islamic teachings by selectively citing phrases or verses from Quran and *Hadiths*. A common example of such *da'wa* is performed by Kyai Haji Anwar Zaid who prefer to speak Javanese and not trying to speak like Arabs even when citing *Quranic* verses, emphasizing the importance of using local traditions, like local songs, as Sunan Bonang (one of the Javanese *Wali*) had done.³⁴ An example Anwar Zaid's emphasis on the importance of Javanese language and philosophy over the Arabic ones was stated in his *da'wa* performance, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y7SOOkWIro>, as follows:

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"If you listen to most of my preaching, I not only employ Javanese language and principles; I actually avoid using Arabic principles as much as possible, ... I am reluctant to use Arabic, because *first*: the audience don't understand and

³³This is why many *dakwah* activities in Indonesia are called "*dakwahtainment*," because they are becoming more and more entertainment than *dakwah*.

³⁴<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXYSepk6IKo>.

I waste my energy; *second*: I forgot those Arabic words and principles myself.”

.....

There are several other popular *Kyais* or *ustads* who also rely on Javanese vernacular for his *da'wa* performances. For example, *Kyai* Mahyan Ahmad, who tends to speak in rhymes and in poetic manner, relies on Javanese daily life as his topics, emphasizing the importance of Javanese values, such as humility and respects for others. For example, he described the story of *Yudistira* (a noble character of Javanese shadow puppet plays called *wayang*) with wisdom and humility, followed by the story of Prophet Muhammad's actions depicting *Yudistira's* characters as shown in e.g. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYe9eSeArf4>. Another example is *Kyai* Abdurokhim also known as Ki Joko Goro-goro.³⁵ His uniqueness lies in the music and the speech styles he employed, which is similar to *wayang* when the puppeteers give divine Hindu advices that the audience must attend to. One of his performances when he uses real Javanese puppets is shown in <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGlZ5wuu5oA>. Another puppet masters who did *da'wa* by performing traditional *wayang* is Ki Bintoro Abdul Rasyid. He uses Javanese music and plays the real puppets accompanied by Javanese traditional singers³⁶ singing traditional Javanese songs with Islamic content. He relies more on the puppet characters in his description of noble values which assimilate and/or connect with Islamic values in Quran or Hadiths. In this performance: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wZTQnnqUiY>, for example, he described the noble characters of the five *Pandawas* (main protagonists of the Mahabharata Hindu epics) in suggesting noble values Javanese Muslims should follow. In this performance, he also suggests that any Javanese traditional performances can be used to teach noble values.³⁷

Perhaps, one of the most well-known and popular *Kiai*, with his clever musical entourage called *Kyai Kanjeng*, is Emha Ainun Najib also known as Cak

³⁵*Ki* is commonly used for Javanese traditional shadow puppet master, and *goro-goro* is the time for clowning in the middle of the one night puppet show.

³⁶These female singers are different from the traditional Javanese singers called "*sinden*," who, instead of wearing traditional Javanese outfits, they wear Islamic *hijab*.

³⁷This use of *wayang* in *dakwah* is intriguing because *wayang* is a hindu-budhist based performance, and many Islamic groups ban such a show in the past and recently. For example: see "Muslim Hard-Liners in Central Java Attack Shadow Puppet Shows" in <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/archive/muslim-hard-liners-in-central-java-attack-shadow-puppet-shows/>.

Nun. He has been a poet, story writer, singer, musical performer, and a *da'wa* preacher at the same time. Rasmussen describes Emha Ainun Najib's *Kiyai Kanjeng* performances as music culture generated by all participants that reflect not only plural religious views but also conflicting political and ideological values shown in the discourses of the performance.³⁸ Cak Nun attempts to portray his ritual performances as an icon for Islamism that campaign for the preservation of local values that are useful for creating peace and happiness. As any who advocates creative interpretation of Islam and its compatibility with local values and traditions, Cak Nun is strongly criticized by those of the puritan backgrounds.³⁹

For those in agreement with Cak Nun, all of these traditional Javanese rituals mixed with Islamic performances as part of *da'wa* are not considered TBC; the narratives used during these performances also supports the traditional rituals such as *tahlilan*, *ziarah*, or *tawassul*⁴⁰ that generate any *silaturahmi*.⁴¹ Thus, while the *da'wa* of many religious Indonesian leaders and speakers adamantly warn Muslims against the pervasive and damaging local cultural influence of TBC, Javanese vernacular *da'wa* prevails, because, as Lim and Putnam suggested, some of the benefits of having a religion is for the people to have identities and social connection through these kinds social rituals and cultural performances that give life satisfaction.⁴²

The resilience of Javanese local values and cultures is supported by Van Dijk who argues that Javanese identification is difficult to totally wipe out by Islamization through *da'wa* or by westernization. The uniqueness of Javanese is shown in the three main cultural types reflecting the moral organization of Javanese values described by Geertz as *abangan* (lay, non-devout), *santri* (devout), and *priyayi* (elite non-devout). Although this has been widely criticized

³⁸For an example of Cak Nun performances, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1fc0mpFqe0>

³⁹Anne K. Rasmussen, "Performing Religious Politics: Islamic Musical Arts in Indonesia" in John M. O'Connell and Salwa E. Castelo-Branco (eds.), *Music and Conflicts*, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

⁴⁰*Tawassul* is an act of supplicating Allah by means of an intermediary which may include a living person, dead person, a good deed, or a name or any deity attributes.

⁴¹*Silaturahmi* is any reunion among families, friends, and community members to create social cohesion and foster better relationship.

⁴²Chaeyoon Lim & Robert D. Putnam, "Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction," *American Sociological Review*, 75 (6), 2010, pp. 914–933.

for not being mutually exclusive (e.g. *santri* and *abangan* can be elite, too), these values were an integration of animistic, Hindu, and Islamic elements, constituting Javanese syncretism which shaped the kind of Islam in Java.⁴³ Daniels agrees that it is difficult for the Javanese local Muslims to apply principles based on the believed-to-be eternal and universal Islamic texts into the local Javanese daily life experience.⁴⁴

This situation does not dampen the controversies on the incompatibility of Islam and local values that occurred throughout the history of Islam in Indonesia. But with the recent influx of Islamic conservative views to Indonesia, the debates and controversies have been expanded to include different groups on many different issues. The debates on TBC that had been between mostly between traditionalist NU and modernist-puritans *Muhammadiyah*, is recently intensified by the recent influx of *Salafist* and *Wahhabist* influence. As Bruinessen stated, with the rise of Islamic puritan-conservatism, intense debates on various issues ranging from implementation of democracy and sharia law topolygamy and pornography have taken place not between NU and *Muhammadiyah*, but between puritan-fundamentalist and moderate-liberal groups, often leading to violence.⁴⁵

C. *Da'wa* and the Search of Noble Values

One of the major purposes of religion, at least from the followers' viewpoints, is to improve human morality, in that by following the teachings and becoming its devout members, people can become better individuals with noble moral values.⁴⁶ This argument is based on the idea that religions usually advocate improvement of human life on earth as well as preparation for afterlife. Islam for example, has changed the old *jahiliyyah* (ignorant and barbarism) values into improved human moral values.⁴⁷ Since moral values continuously change in line with changes in human needs and activities, Muslims, like any members of any

⁴³ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

⁴⁴ Timothy P. Daniels, "Muslim Puritans, Cultural *Da'wa* and Reformation." In *Islamic Spectrum in Java*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 95-113.

⁴⁵ Martin V. Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam...*

⁴⁶ William J. Wainwright, *Religion and Morality*, (Burlington: Ashgate Philosophy of Religion Series, 2005).

⁴⁷ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

religious groups, are faced with life realities of modern worlds, such that to survive and succeed in it, any human being, including Muslims must face and/or adjust to these changes. Moreover, due to the differences among human beings, humans are challenged to continuously in search of better and nobler values to better deal with world problems and create a better world community.⁴⁸

In line with Gadamer's arguments, modern human communication through various media, including the advanced technology that enhances the speed and ease of access to different kinds of information, inevitably led people to be exposed to and deal with different information from different backgrounds.⁴⁹ This information contain various values that any participants in world communication must, to a degree, conform to those values. Communication and negotiation among nations have produced various agreements including values aimed at creating better world communities, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Religious groups attempting to preach noble values usually cannot avoid discussing universal values, because they have to consider audiences of different backgrounds that have been exposed to the thoughts behind these values. World's religious groups have to face the fact that communication among human beings from different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds is unavoidable and that misunderstanding and conflicts have occurred, because these varieties of people believe in their own moral standards and are eager to implement those in their interactions with others who have different values. This situation applies to *da'wa* performers in Indonesia, many of whom have considered world's values and then, to various degrees, justify these values that are directly or indirectly contained in the religious teachings and texts. Even those who opposed these modern values have to try hard to convince their audience about the justification for their opposition, which in turn create a rhetorical war and discursive negotiation between Islamic and modern values.

The direction of the arguments of the *da'wa* is usually determined by the motives of the speakers which depends on their backgrounds including their groups' identity. Schwartz's surveys, conducted in some 20 countries in the

⁴⁸Rushworth M. Kidder, *Shared Values for a Troubled World*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994).

⁴⁹Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, translated and edited by David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

world, result in general motivational values across cultures that become the foundation of human action and behavior in the success of their lives. Schwartz identified 10 human motivational values that can be used to analyze the motives of anyone in the world, including the speakers in the *da'wa* activities. These values are: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. These motivational values may or may not be noble or lead to the establishment of just, prosperous, and peaceful society. And, when applied to many cultures, the first four values listed above, i.e. power, achievement, hedonism, and stimulation, may lead to personal gains, control over other people and resources, and fulfillment of one's own needs and satisfaction and not for the well-being of the majority of the people.⁵⁰

Following Gullestad's definition, values are changing concepts shaped and reshaped through interaction among people from different backgrounds that "function as horizons and resources for the making of moral judgments."⁵¹ To be moral, human values must not only help create better society, but also encourage community members' willingness to sacrifice for the wellbeing and welfare of other people. According to Bielefeldt, to be noble, values must contain emancipatory principle allowing all human beings to be entitled to equal rights of freedom and opportunity to move up the societal hierarchies.⁵² Values are noble when it helps the weak and benefits the majority of the people, which, from Schwartz's list above, may include: universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. Others, such as Harrison and Huntington see that the plural world's societies, being prone to conflicts, have led to the emergence of values considered noble, and the most common ones are: Individual responsibility, treating others as we wish them to treat us, respect for life, economic and social justice, nature-friendly ways of life, honesty, moderation, freedom (expressed in ways that do not harm others), and tolerance for diversity.⁵³

⁵⁰S. H. Schwartz, "Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theory and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries", in M. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 25, (New York: Academic Press, 1992), pp. 1-65.

⁵¹M. Gullestad, *Everyday Life Philosophers*, (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), p. 21.

⁵²Heiner Bielefeldt, "Muslim Voices in the Human Rights Debate", *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 17, 1995, pp. 587-617.

⁵³Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: Remarking of Word Order*.

There are values not only based on surveys but also formulated and/or selected to create a better, prosperous, and peaceful world communities. These universal human values are proposed by researchers who independently identified values that are similar across cultural, national, ethnic and religious boundaries. For example, values surveyed in Kidder's study includes: love, truthfulness, fairness, freedom, unity (including cooperation, group allegiance, and oneness with others), tolerance, respect for life, and responsibility (which includes taking care of yourself, of other individuals, and showing concern for community interests). Additional values mentioned in his study are courage, knowing right from wrong, wisdom, hospitality, obedience, and stability.⁵⁴

Since these values are the results of surveys and studies from across cultures of the world, there must be at least aspects of Islamic, Western, and even local Javanese values that are compatible with or similar to the values listed above. My notes on various *da'wa* speeches in Indonesia reveal those noble values commonly cited in Islamic speeches and commentaries usually are based on the Quran and Hadiths. These values are frequently stated in phrases such as "*rahamatan lil 'alamin*" (to be a blessing to all mankind) and "*amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar*" (do the right and shun the wrong). Islamic preaching emphasizes the importance of "*akhlak*" (practice of virtue, morality and manners or moral deeds and actions). This generic term which in many *da'wa* speeches is interchangeably used with "*amal saleh*" (charity and righteousness) to refer to practically any human noble values, including not only kindness but also patience, forgiveness, love and compassion. There are many other terms frequently mentioned in *da'wa* performances, such as "*amanah*" (honest and trustworthy) and "*istiqamah*" (piously following the right path/faith). The meanings of these terms are frequently expanded in *da'wa* speeches to include many other useful human values including those listed by Kidder.⁵⁵

Islamic preachers usually understand these noble values and they reinterpret and cite versus in Quran and notes from Hadiths in order to show that Islam teaches noble values and to convince the audience that Islam is the best and truest religion. According to Bielefeldt, for example, for values of love and

⁵⁴Rushworth M. Kidder, *Shared Values for a Troubled World*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994).

⁵⁵Rushworth M. Kidder, *Shared Values for a Troubled World*.

compassion, as well as sympathy and kindness towards all mankind, Prophet Muhammad was quoted as saying "Whosoever is not thankful to the people, then he is not thankful to Allah" (al-Tirmidhi). They also quoted Prophet Muhammad when he said: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" (Bukhari).⁵⁶ Thus, selective quotes from Quran and Hadiths that are used by preachers to show and teach the noble values of Islam to include modern noble values that are not clearly and literally stated in the religious texts. It should be admitted that, with the wrong motives and strong conviction on the absolute literal truthfulness of Quran and Hadith, some other groups can also selectively quote verses to spark intolerance and hatred against other groups. While the negotiation among these contradicting views and values continues in various parts of the worlds including in Indonesia, growing awareness due to expanding information exchange will lead to better understanding of the need for and implementation of better human values. As Gould suggested, despite our subjectivity and locality in our views of values and principles, humans will continue to search for and eventually agree with what are universally noble, including democracy and human rights.⁵⁷

Similar to Islamic values described above, Indonesian and Javanese culture also provides wealth of traditional teachings containing noble values useful for the welfare and wellbeing of Indonesian communities. The traditional Indonesian noble values can be found in philosophies contained in various art performances such as *wayang* as well in literary works such as stories, poems, proverbs, sayings and idiomatic expressions. Suwarno compiled a volume containing sayings and proverbs commonly cited in Javanese speeches including vernacular *da'wa* performances described above. These sayings Javanese traditional values including those that Javanese considered noble but not necessarily uniquely Javanese, such as the followings:

"*Wani ngalah luhur wekasane*" (a humble person will be exalted in the end)⁵⁸

"*Menang tanpa ngasorake*" (to win without humiliating)⁵⁹

⁵⁶Heiner Bielefeldt, "Muslim Voices in the Human Rights Debate", *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 17, 1995, pp. 587-617.

⁵⁷Carol C. Gould, *Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

⁵⁸Peter Suwarno, *Dictionary of Javanese Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions*, (Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press, 1999), p. 19.

"*Mikul duwur mendem jero*" (to maintain the reputation of others)⁶⁰

"*Dikela iwake (amek iwak) aja nganti buthek banyune*" (lit: catching the fish. Without muddying the water, meaning: achieving one's goal while avoiding commotion and maintaining peace)⁶¹

"*Becik ketitik, ala ketoro*" (avoid blaming others, because the guilty parties will in the end be exposed)⁶²

The *dakwahs* that employ Javanese language narrate daily life events, frequently citing some Javanese proverbs and justifying their significance by quoting texts from Quran or Hadith. The employment of Javanese values in *da'wa* is not only limited to Kyai Abdurrokhim and Bintoro Abdul Rasyid who base their *da'wa* on *wayang* performances but also on others who use any local language or even Indonesian. When *da'wa* activities are conducted in local settings, for example, they use Javanese language and rituals with appropriate philosophical corollaries, while inescapably communicate the local matters where Javanese cultural values are deliberated. For example, in his emphasis on using Javanese language and principles in a *da'wa* performance, Kyai Anwar Zaid asked his audience to sing a Javanese song that contained both Javanese and Islamic values:

Kang aran soleh (being a pious person)

Bagus atine (has a good heart)

Kerono mapan saking ilmune (because one is filled with knowledge)

Laku tarekat sak makrifate (implementing *tarekat*⁶³, including the *makrifat*).⁶⁴

Ugo hakekat manjing rasane (and righteousness becomes part of one's heart)

.....⁶⁵

The song may contain Islamic principles and Arabic words, but, using Javanese language in a Javanese setting, the preacher presented the similarity and unity between Javanese and Islamic values.

⁵⁹Peter Suwarno, *Dictionary of Javanese Proverbs...*, p. 199.

⁶⁰Peter Suwarno, *Dictionary of Javanese Proverbs...*, p. 205.

⁶¹Peter Suwarno, *Dictionary of Javanese Proverbs...*, p. 13.

⁶²Peter Suwarno, *Dictionary of Javanese Proverbs...*, p. 44.

⁶³*Tarekat*: the right ways to be close to God the Sufism way and coexistence with others, including the *makrifat*: having the knowledge about truth and God).

⁶⁴*Makrifat*: having the knowledge about truth and God).

⁶⁵Part of a song called "Sy'ir Tanpo Waton", known to be written and sung by Abdurrahman Wahid. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y7S00kWIro>

Cak Nun also emphasizes the fact that many values in Islam have already been taught and practiced in Javanese traditional beliefs. In addition to his poems mimicking those of Javanese songs, Cak Nun frequently shows similarities between Javanese and Islamic principles. For example, he argued that Javanese have long believed in “*manunggaling kawula Gusti*”⁶⁶ before Islam came to Java with its teaching of *makrifatullah* (see *makrifate* above), and Javanese already believe in *Mahayu-hayuning bangsa*,⁶⁷ before Islam came and taught the idea of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*.⁶⁸

Despite criticisms against such vernacular *da’was*, the combination of Islamic and Javanese language and principles entertain increasing number of audience and create gladness as well as social cohesion in the local communities. Thus, the wealth of local noble values contained in these performances will likely prevail.⁶⁹

Religious communication, including *da’wa* is an effort not only to spread Islamic teaching and strengthen Islamic faith but also to create a better civil society by discovering and negotiating existing beliefs, values, and principles. Although many would argue that the noble human values are already contained in Islamic teachings and texts, the discovery of those values may be done through learning and engaging in discussion about human values of other communities. Democracy may not be clearly stated in Islamic texts, but Islamic texts can and have been used to justify the arguments for, if not the implementation of, democracy in different Islamic countries and among people living in non-democratic Arab worlds.⁷⁰

While *da’wa* activities in Indonesia constitute efforts of discovering, negotiating, and preserving values for the sake of improving the future of better civil societies, there are *da’wa* activities that may impede such efforts. The different types of *da’wa* reflect the type of Islamic groups, each campaigning to reshape the future of Islam and are mostly motivated by either: (1) the search,

⁶⁶*Manunggaling kawula-Gusti* means the spiritual unity between mankind and God.

⁶⁷*Mahayu-hayuning bangsa* is a Javanese cosmic views that humans are responsible for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of all mankind and all things on earth.

⁶⁸For more examples of Cak Nun’s association between Islamic teaching and Javanese principles, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SEYPPZgf3g>

⁶⁹ See, for example, the conflicts and arguments between preachers from NU versus MTA (Majelis Tafsir al-Qur’an) in <http://www.lensaIndonesia.com/2012/01/28/kyai-nu-sering-dihujat-adat-tahlilan-dibilang-dosanya-tak-ubahnya-orang-berzina.html>

⁷⁰Wissam S, Yafi, *Inevitable Democracy in the Arab World ...*

discovery, and implementation of noble values through justifying the usefulness of those values using Islamic teachings and texts contextually, or (2) the effort to implement the literal interpretation of Islamic teachings and texts in Indonesia regardless the any new changes in modern principles or local beliefs. Those that may hinder the search for noble values ground their arguments and activities on: (1) literal, as opposed to contextual, interpretation of religious texts that are considered absolute and sacred; (2) total rejection of secularism, pluralism and relativism; (3) monopoly of final and unchallenged religious truth, claimed in an authoritarian way; and (4) words and action showing fanaticism, exclusiveness, intolerance, radicalism, and even militarism.⁷¹

Despite many *da'wa* activities from these literalist and fundamentalist groups, the Islamic search of noble values in Indonesia will continue to include discussions of various issues, whether or not they are directly compatible with any religious teachings. This is so, because in today's democratic Indonesia people freely communicate through various venues where debates on any topics and in various forms will continue to be filled with exchanges that yearn more rational thoughts for the welfare and wellbeing of diverse Indonesian societies.

D. Conclusion

This paper describes that *da'wa* and religious speeches in Indonesia constitutes a search of noble values through the negotiation of Islamic, global or western, as well as local values. Despite some oppositions, western-based democratic values have been undoubtedly significant parts of the Islamic *da'wa* in Indonesia not only due to the contextual reinterpretation of Islamic texts from the time of Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Sayyid Qutb (1906-66), and Fazlur Rahman (1911-88), but also, more importantly, because of the works of Islamic progressive leaders such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif, and Nurcholish Madjid.

Studies show that *da'wa* of Islam in Indonesia also have adapted to the Javanese local values since the time of *Walisongo* (nine saints) when, for example, Sunan Bonang employed Javanese arts and art performances to spread Islam that

⁷¹Lili Z Munir, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Impact on Women", paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) Forum, conducted at the Hilton Hotel, New York, March, 2003, pp. 27-30.

created a negotiation and a marriage between Islamic and Javanese local values, that in turn helped defined a unique kind of Islam in Indonesia. This kind of *da'wa* is continued until today where several Kyai use Javanese vernacular or local arts performances and rituals to preach about Islam with themes related to daily Javanese lives while at the same time incorporating Javanese principles in discussing about Islam, the Prophet and the holy texts.

The increasing popularity of modern *da'wa* in various Indonesian media as well as vernacular *da'wa* using local languages that is aimed at entertaining the audience fulfill one of the functions of religion; that is to create social cohesion, identity, a sense of belonging. The inclusion of modern democratic values and Javanese local values in various Indonesian *da'wa* have helped shaped the kind of Islam in Indonesia where Muslims are known as moderate, often called "Muslims with smiling faces," and frequently mentioned by world leaders as a model for Islam and democracy.

The recent rise of conservatism and fundamentalism, as observable in various *da'wa* and debates may have created disagreements, tension and conflicts. However, the view that anything deemed as coming from outside of Islamic teachings and texts is incompatible with Islam will be continuously challenged not only by the expansion of varieties of media that expose everyone to all types of modern information outside of Islam, but also by the perseverance of the Indonesian people's attachment to their own local identity, beliefs, and values. The increasingly popular Javanese vernacular *da'was* that have made use of traditional performances encompass daily life events portrayed in the use of local language containing local beliefs, values, and principles that are made compatible with Islamic teachings. This proved to be a valid example of the resilience of Javanese local values that play a significant role in the Indonesian Islamic rhetorical landscape as well as in the search of Islamic Indonesian noble values.[w]

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