

ISLAMIC DAKWA IN TAIWAN: ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss the activities and challenges of Indonesian Muslim dakwa in Taiwan. Firstly the concept of dakwa and the history of Islam in Taiwan was explained before discussing the activities and challenges of dakwa in Taiwan. This research is a qualitative research with library research. The documentation method is used to collect data related to the activities and challenges of Indonesian Muslim dakwa in Taiwan. Sources of data in this study are books, articles, and web-sites. In addition, interviews via social media were conducted to the secretary-general of the Indonesian Student Association in Taiwan. The results showed that the activities of Indonesian Muslim dakwa in Taiwan are inseparable from the existence of mosques that serve as centers of dakwa activity. The forms of Indonesian Muslim dakwa activities in Taiwan are Islamic teaching, publishing Islamic bulletins, learning to read the Koran, and celebrating religious holidays. The dakwa challenges in Taiwan faced were that Dakwa activities were still carried out internally in their respective ethnic groups, Dakwa financing was minimal, and the difficulty of regenerating Muslim youth. Added to this is the challenge from outside in the form of reporting on a Western perspective that Islam is a radical religion. Plus, the Taiwan government adheres to the concept of freedom of religion. Every citizen may adhere to a religion or not adhere.

Introduction

In the 2000s, many young people in Indonesia liked F4 Boy Band and the film Meteor Garden. This F4 Boy Band originated from the country of Taiwan, which is one of the small countries that was established in 1912 with the capital of Taipei. The total area of Taiwan is around 36,000 KM². The population is around 23 million. The religions in Taiwan are Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, and Islam. The currency is Xin Taibi or also called the New Taiwan Dollar (NTD) (Anastasia, 2014, p. 3). Taiwan is a country that is visited by many foreign workers from other countries, including countries in Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and others, as well as Turkey and some Middle Eastern countries that carry their respective cultures and even religions.

The majority of the older generation in Taiwan are Buddhists, and some are Taoists (Laliberte, 2003, p. 158). But there are also Christians, Catholics, and among young people there are agnostics. Meanwhile, there are also Taiwanese who are Muslim. Muslims in Taiwan are a minority community compared to other religions. The followers of Islam in Taiwan are only 0.3% of the total population of Taiwan. Migrant Muslims generally come from backgrounds of students, workers, and migrants from various countries, such as Turkey, Yemen, Indonesia, Malaysia, and other countries. The number of Indonesian workers in 2019 Based on data from Kantor Dagang dan Ekonomi Indonesia-KDEI (Indonesian Economic and Trade Office) of Taiwan is 276.41 (<https://simpati.kdei-taipei.org>, 2019). The Indonesian Muslim community in Taiwan is a fairly large number consisting of workers and students.

The diversity of character and behavior of Indonesian Muslims in Taiwan in addition they did not have a strong Islamic religious foundation is very vulnerable to being influenced by a free Taiwanese culture. In fact, many Indonesians in Taiwan are involved in promiscuity, drinking, and other behaviors that are contrary to religious values. In addition,

specifically, foreign workers in Taiwan generally cannot be optimal in carrying out religious rituals because the company policy or employer policy still employs workers every working day and does not provide an opportunity to carry out religious rituals (Sampurna, 2019, p. 175). This situation encouraged Islamic organizations to hold Islamic dakwa activities in the form of Islamic teaching in several mosques in cities such as Taipei, Taichung, Chung-li, Kaohsiung, and Tainan. In carrying out the dakwa activities, there are many challenges faced by these Islamic organizations. So, this paper will explain more deeply about the activities and challenges of Indonesian Muslim dakwa in Taiwan.

This paper is a library research study conducted by searching a number of books, journal articles, and searching several websites to add data information. In addition, data collection was carried out through social media interviews with Rahmandhika Firdauzha Hary Hernandha, he was secretary general of the National Central University (NCU) Muslim Club (2016/2017), and chairperson of Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia-PPI (Indonesian Student Association) of Taiwan (2017/2018). He stayed in Hsinchu about 2 hours by local train from Taipei.

The Concept of Dakwa

According to Abdullah, literally dakwa comes from arabic word *da'a-yad'u-da'watan* which means to call, and invite. The word dakwa can be etymologically meant to call for goodness, the culprit is Allah Almighty, the Prophets and those who believe in Allah and do good deeds. On the other hand, dakwa also means inviting evil that the perpetrators are demons, infidels, or hypocrites. The former explanation can be seen in chapter al-Baqarah (2): 221 where Allah invites to heaven. The latter explanation can be seen in chapter Fatir (35): 6 where Satan invites his group to become inhabitants of hell (Abdullah, 2019, p. 2).

Whereas in terminology, dakwa means an effort to change people from negative situations to positive ones, such as from kufr (means to disbelieve) to iman (faith), from division to unity, from disobedience to obedience to achieve the pleasure of Allah. Abdullah further explained that dakwa was different from the tabligh (literally means 'to deliver') which only conveyed the teachings of Islam through oral and written alone but dakwa including all activities that encourage the good through oral, written, recorded tapes, and gave examples of good deeds (dakwa bil hal). To sum up, so tabligh is part of dakwa (Abdullah, 2019, p. 5).

Whereas according to Meuleman the arabic word da`wah - literally means a call or invitation. This word is a general term that denotes the spread of Islam. In Malay or Indonesian language commonly written 'dakwa'. Although the concept includes efforts to convert non-Muslims to Islam, the meaning of dakwa also refers to activities aimed at strengthening and deepening the faith of Muslims and helping them direct the behavior of daily life in accordance with Islamic principles. Since the birth of Islam, dakwa has been an important aspect of the Islamic religion. But, of course, in the 20th century, dakwa activities and organizations have grown and varied widely throughout the Muslim world and have adopted new forms and new goals (Meuleman, 2011, p. 236).

Dakwa is not just the authority of ulama (Islamic scholars) or religious leaders because dakwa is not limited to religious teaching activities. Every Muslim has the same obligation to preach. Azis distinguishes cultural and structural dakwa. Cultural dakwa can take the form of dakwa by giving examples of good behavior, and this is individual. In addition, there is institutionalized cultural propaganda by empowering Muslims through Baitul Mal wa Tamwil-BMT (microfinance institutions that are operated based on Islamic principles) and Islamic financial institutions. Activities undertaken by Baitul Mal wa Tamwil and Islamic financial institutions are carried out by delivering nonverbal dakwa and through financial

management policies based on Islamic values. There is also a structural dakwa that aims to change the religious behavior of the people quickly. One way of structural dakwa is to take the political path. By plunging into politics, prosecutors convey religious values through parliament, for example, accommodating religious values in the drafting of laws. Structural dakwa believes that if Muslims do structural dakwa, religion will develop rapidly and expand in a short time. Furthermore, by means of political propaganda, state policies and legislation are expected to accommodate Islamic religious values (Aziz, 2004, p. 4).

Islamic History in Taiwan

According to Pelletier, there are two waves about the arrival of Muslims in Taiwan. The first wave of early generations of Muslims is believed to have settled in Taiwan in 1683 along with the Ming Dynasty. Some Muslim families at that time lived in coastal cities such as Lukang, Keelung, Sual, Tamsui, and Changhua. However, the majority of Muslims at that time assimilated into mainstream culture and gradually stopped practicing Islamic teachings. Even the mosques that were built at that time, have now been replaced by temples (Pelletier, 2014, pp. 51–52). The second wave is the arrival of Muslims from Mainland China during the Chinese Civil War period. The second wave of Muslim migration to Taiwan occurred in 1949. It is estimated that 20,000 Chinese Muslims came from all parts of China including Xinjiang (Uighurs); Hui or even Han ethnic. Among them there was general officers and even a minister named general Bai Chongxi (from the military wing of the Kuomintang party (KMT) who was defeated by the Chinese Communist Party's military). The number of Muslims in this early generation was quite large and some of them still retained the Islamic tradition for the next 2-3 generations (Pillsbury, 1981, pp. 4–5).

General Bai Chongxi became the first pioneer in establishing ties with the Taiwanese Muslim community. He established the first place of worship for Muslims communally in the spring of 1949. General Bai built a Japanese-style house in Taipei that was used for place of worship, networking and as a place for newcomers to stay until they found a home. The second house of worship was built the following year, a Japanese-style house. The location of the two places of worship buildings built by General Bai is precisely in Da'an and Guting areas. The existence of these two houses of worship attracted many Muslims in Taiwan at that time to build a dwelling house in the vicinity and build a Muslim community (Pillsbury, 1981, p. 81).

At present there are around 50,000-60,000 Taiwanese Muslim as well as around 200,000 foreign Muslim who were working and studying in Taiwan and generally come from Southeast Asia. The Chinese Muslim Association (CMA) is a Chinese Muslim organization in Taiwan whose role is very significant in regulating Islamic activities especially Taiwanese Muslims. The CMA is in charge of managing Muslim funerals, pilgrimage (hajj) registration, halal food certification, halal restaurant certification, and other Islamic courses.

There are seven mosques which are become the center of Muslim religious activities in Taiwan. All of them are located in big cities. The first is the oldest one 'Taipei Grand Mosque'. This mosque was built in 1960 by General Bi Chongxi. This mosque is the most famous mosque and the most important place of worship for Muslims in Taiwan. The mosque was established for Muslim religious services and further become a diplomatic window for Taiwan government to be connected with the Taiwanese Muslim community and globally Muslim in the world including Muslim leaders in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. So many leaders of Muslim countries who ever came to this mosque, such as King Hussein of Jordan and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia (Hsiu-Ping, 2019, p. 143). Beside the Taipei Grand Mosque and the Taipei

Cultural Mosque, there are also the Taichung Mosque in Taichung, the Tainan Mosque in Tainan, the Longgang Mosque in Taoyuan, the Kaohsiung Mosque in Kaohsiung, and At-Ta-qwa Mosque in Taoyuan. In addition, there are small mosques in Chung-li and other places (Taiwan Travel Guide for Muslim, 2019).

Islamic Dakwa Activities in Taiwan

According to Hernandha, the activity of Islamic dakwa especially that carried out by Taiwanese Muslim was very passive. Islamic dakwa is actually more actively carried out by immigrants from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Gambia who come both as workers and as students. The stretching of Islamic dakwa in Taiwan is inseparable from the presence of mosques in several cities which serve as centers for religious activities of Indonesian Muslims in Taiwan. Religious activities carried out such as Islamic teaching, publishing Islamic bulletins, learning to read the Koran, skills training, and celebrations of Islamic religious holidays. Broadly speaking, the major mosques that are the centers of Islamic studies in Taiwan are in the cities of Taipei, Taichung, Chung-li, Kaohsiung and Tainan plus a number of relatively small mosques in several other cities (Interview with R. F. H. Hernandha, 2020).

In line with Abdullah's theory which says that the meaning of dakwa includes all activities that encourage goodness, the activities of Indonesian Muslim dakwa in Taiwan are not limited to oral and written dakwa because their dakwa activities are more varied tailored to the needs of Indonesian Muslims in Taiwan (Abdullah, 2019, p. 5). Meanwhile according to Meuleman point of view, the form of dakwa that adopts new forms is adapted based on needs (Meuleman, 2011, p. 236).

Islamic organization formed by the Indonesian Muslim community in Taiwan also played an important role in carrying out of dakwa in Taiwan. There are four Islamic

organizations that play a role in pioneering dakwa activities in Taiwan, namely: 1) Majelis Taklim Yasin Taipei (Yasin Muslim Grup of Taipei). This Muslim group has routine activities like reading chapter yasin (name of one chapter in Koran) every thursday night and at the same time Islamic teaching; 2) Ikatan Muslim Indonesia Taiwan (The Taiwan Indonesian Muslim Association) is located in the city of Taichung. The routine activity of this association is weekly and monthly Islamic teaching; 3) Forum Silaturahmi Muslim Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Silaturahmi Forum) which is located in the city of Chung-li. The routine activity of this forum is monthly Islamic teaching, sometimes holding mabit (doing i'tikaf at the mosque overnight) and; 4) Ikatan Warga Muslim Indonesia Taiwan (The Taiwan Indonesian Muslim Community Association) which is located in the city of Kaohsiung. This Association has routine activities like weekly Islamic teachings, discussions, and monthly Islamic teachings. These Islamic organizations hold Islamic activities in their respective places by involving Indonesian Muslims (Interview with R. F. H. Hernandha, 2020).

In addition, the role of the largest Islamic-social organization in Indonesia, Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah are also very significant and even becomes a driving force for smaller Islamic organizations in Taiwan. This was done by Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Nahdhatul Ulama-PCINU (the Nahdhatul Ulama Special Branch Manager) and Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Muhammadiyah-PCIM (the Muhammadiyah Special Branch Manager) with their several work programs. PCINU and PCIM have their own Islamic teaching schedules, some weekly and monthly. Specifically, PCIM has Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Mengajar-PKBM (the Muhammadiyah Community Learning Center) which holds a schedule of learning once a week and extracurricular learning in the form martial art which called Tapak Suci. PCINU also has its own weekly and monthly Islamic teaching. According to Hernandha, like PCINU and PCIM, Persatuan Pelajar

Indonesia-PPI (the Indonesian Student Association) also has its own Learning Activity Center in Taiwan which hold weekly learning activities (Interview with R. F. H. Hernandha, 2020).

The large role of PCINU and PCIM is also seen when getting permission for performing 'id prayer (idul fitri) from taiwan government. In Taiwan, every religious activity must obtain official permission from the government. Small Islamic organizations that are not yet known by the Taiwanese government have difficulty in obtaining 'id prayer permits, so the assistance of the PCINU and PCIM is felt because permits from the Taiwanese government have become easier with a copy of permission from the head of Kantor Dagang dan Ekonomi Indonesia-KDEI (the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office) in Taiwan. Islamic organizations in Taiwan often even hold joint activities such as special event of dakwa with PCINU and PCIM. To sum up, all Islamic organization work together to hold dakwa activities in their respective styles. Referring to Azis theory, the PCINU and PCIM dakwa models belong to the institutionalized cultural dakwa model, where dakwa activities are not only limited to Islamic teaching, but also dakwa in the form of organizational management policies that facilitate dakwa activities in Taiwan (Aziz, 2004, p. 4).

Preachers in Islamic teaching activities are sometimes from internal leaders of PCINU and PCIM and sometimes there are preachers from Indonesia. Besides PCINU and PCIM there is also Indonesian Islamic philanthropic organizations that often hold Islamic teaching in Taiwan, namely Dompot Dhuafa. Dompot Dhuafa is a charitable institution in Indonesia which one of the programs is social and dakwa activities both in Indonesia and abroad. Dompot Dhuafa often conducts Islamic teaching activities in Taiwan and even brings religious leaders from Indonesia to give islamic teaching in special religious holidays.

According to Hernandha, in addition to dakwa activities as explained above, part of the dakwa activity is also the existence of halal food and restaurant certification. In Taiwan

there is already Majelis Ulama Indonesia-MUI (Indonesian Ulama Council) representative for halal certification specifically for Indonesian food stalls (Interview with R. F. H. Hernandha, 2020). While in Taipei there are Halal CMA (the Chinese Muslim Association), Halal Taipei Grand Mosque, and Taiwan Halal Integrity Development Association (THIDA). To obtain official certification from these institutions, restaurants and public food stalls can apply for the certification process by following the procedures determined by each institution (Rifa'i, 2018, p. 112). So it's no wonder that in Taiwan there are many halal restaurants, Muslim-friendly restaurants, halal meat sellers, Indonesian halal stalls, kebab stalls, Turkish food stalls, and even halal Thai food stalls. This shows in the context of halal food availability that is not a difficult problem to find.

Talking about the study of the Koran for Indonesian children who are Muslim, according to Hernandha, indeed at this time is not found a specific Islamic teaching for children. However, there are some Indonesian Muslim children who attend religious schools under the Turkish government in Taiwan which runs the Koran memorization program (tahfidzul Qur'an). Every Muslim child from any country is allowed to join this program. Unfortunately for Indonesian Muslim children in Taiwan it is quite difficult to participate in this program due to the lack of vacation time given by the company or employer for their parents (Sampurna, 2019, p. 165).

Furthermore, Hernandha explained about the development of dakwa activities in Taiwan. He said at this time is not only centered at the mosque but also on several campuses in Taiwan. Cross-border Muslim students actively hold Islamic activities. For instance at National Central University (NCU) there is the NCU Muslim Club, at National Chiao Tung University (NCTU) there is also the NCTU Muslim Student Club. The current NCTU Muslim Student Club Chairperson is a student from Yemen and his representative from Indonesia, previously the Chairperson is from India and many

administrators from Indonesia (Interview with R. F. H. Hernandha, 2020).

Asked about financing dakwa activities in Taiwan, Hernandha answered that they were obtained through mutual cooperation, waqaf (donation of building or plot of land or other assets to be used for Islamic activities), and donations from charities in Indonesia. In addition to dakwa activities in Taiwan is also often done by attending cultural exhibitions at several cultural events held by the local government in Taiwan. In these cultural events, Muslims often perform nasheed (Islamic songs) and qiro'ah (a variety of Koran reading) as a form of participation in enlivening a cultural festival (Interview with R. F. H. Hernandha, 2020).

The Challenge of Islamic Dakwa in Taiwan

Among the challenges of Islamic dakwa activities in Taiwan are Islamic dakwa activities in the form of Islamic teaching in several places that are still carried out based on certain ethnicities, for example Indonesian Muslims hold Islamic teaching with only Indonesian Muslim communities, then Muslims from the Middle East, Turkey, and even Taiwanese Muslims themselves conduct Islamic teaching in their respective communities. This can be understood probably in order that the language presented in the Islamic teaching is delivered in their respective languages. This religious attitude which is still ethnically exclusive also implies a lack of communal ties between Taiwanese Muslims and the other Muslim communities. Communal ties only operate within each community. Furthermore, the lack of communal ties has implications for the minimal financing of dakwa activities in each community. Whereas if the ties of ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) among Muslims across ethnic and cross-country lines are strong, the financial shortages related to dakwa financing can be relatively overcome.

Fortunately, in 2006, Forum Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia Taiwan-FORMMIT (the Taiwan Indonesian Muslim

Student Forum) was established which mediated communication between Indonesian Muslims and other Muslim communities in Taiwan. This Muslim Student Forum tries to bridge the communication gap between ethnic groups, tighten the knot of fraternity that is tenuous, and minimize differences and promote equality between ethnicities. The real activity of this forum is to conduct dakwa activities through the media (virtual dakwa) so that its reach is wider and not limited to physical gatherings. Language constraints are also overcome by the delivery of dakwa in a language that is understood by all communities which is using both English and Taiwanese (Interview with R. F. H. Hernandha, 2020).

The next challenge is that the Taiwanese government regards all religions as part of culture. So there are no religious holidays in Taiwan except cultural holidays which related to Taiwanese cultural event. The Taiwanese government regards religious affairs as a private matter, each citizen was free to embrace religion or not embrace religion. So do not be surprised if there are many young people in Taiwan who are agnostic. Most of them consider religion not something urgent in daily life. Interestingly, every religious day, almost everyone joined to celebrate it. For instance, when Christmas day, everyone participates in Christmas, also when there is a religious celebration in the temple everyone celebrates and so does other major religious celebrations.

The next challenge is that Muslims in Taiwan are a minority compared to the total population of Taiwan. Taiwanese Muslims are only 0.3% or 50-60 thousand of the total 23 million people in Taiwan. This situation as a minority is compounded by the weakness of the Taiwanese Muslim economy because most of them are middle to lower class workers. The reporting of Islam from a Western perspective that Islam is a radical religion has made minority Taiwanese Muslim groups increasingly weak. Some of them are even reluctant to reveal their identity as Muslims in public for fear of radical stigma. According to Solahuding Ma, Secretary General of the

Chinese Muslim Association in Taiwan, the next challenge is the regeneration of young Muslims is very difficult. Currently most Taiwanese Muslims consist of elderly people who have difficulty to transfer Islamic teachings the younger generation because many migrate to big cities (<https://republika.co.id/>, 2017)

In addition to the challenges of dakwa in Taiwan mentioned, of course there are also opportunities that can be used in order to optimize the activities of dakwa. Currently the Taiwan government in order to attract tourism from Muslim countries is designing Muslim-friendly environment programs, namely promoting tourism from the Islamic side. The application of this policy, currently almost all airports, hotels in Taiwan already provide prayer room facilities. Then in order to provide halal food service, the Taiwan government in collaboration with The Chinese Muslim Association has issued halal certifications for several restaurants. Even in 2017 there were 100 certified halal restaurants, many Muslim-friendly restaurants, and the availability of halal central kitchens in Taiwan. This is intended to provide a sense of security and comfort for Muslim travelers in eating halal food in Taiwan.

Conclusion

Indonesian Muslim dakwa activities in Taiwan are very varied including dakwa activities within the Muslim community as well as outgoing activities. Dakwa activities internally include Islamic teaching, publishing Islamic bulletins, learning to read the Koran, and celebrating religious holidays. In addition there are also Indonesian Muslim children who follow the program tahfidzul Qur`an (memorization of the Koran) at religious school under the Turkish government in Taiwan. Interestingly, dakwa activities are not only centered at the mosque but also on several campuses in Taiwan such as the National Central University (NCU) Muslim Club, National Chiao Tung University (NCTU) Muslim Student Club. The model of dakwa activity in Taiwan is also the existence of halal

food and restaurant certification by Majelis Ulama Indonesia-MUI (Indonesian Ulama Council) and by The Chinese Muslim Association (CMA) to serve the availability of halal food. Da'wah activities outside the community are carried out by participating in cultural exhibitions by displaying nasheed (Islamic songs) and qiro'ah (a variety of the Koran reading) at several cultural events held by the local government of Taiwan.

Several Islamic organizations, both established in Taiwan and Islamic organizations from Indonesia, are the pioneers of dakwa activities. Islamic organizations established in Taiwan such as Majelis Taklim Yasin Taipei (Yasin Muslim Grup of Taipei), Ikatan Muslim Indonesia Taiwan (The Taiwan Indonesian Muslim Association), Forum Silaturahmi Muslim Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Silaturahmi Forum), Ikatan Warga Muslim Indonesia Taiwan (The Taiwan Indonesian Muslim Community Association), and Forum Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia Taiwan (Taiwan Indonesian Muslim Student Forum) held Islamic activities such as Islamic teaching, yasinan (reciting Chapter Yasin of Koran), mabit (doing i'tikaf overnight), and discussion about Islam. There are also Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Nahdhatul Ulama-PCINU (the Nahdhatul Ulama Special Branches Managers) and Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Muhammadiyah-PCIM (the Muhammadiyah Special Branches Managers) which play an active role in driving the dakwa activities in Taiwan. In addition there is the Indonesian charity Dompot Dhuafa which also holds Islamic teaching on religious holidays.

The challenges of dakwa in Taiwan can be analyzed both from within Muslims themselves and from the outside (external). Internal challenges are; first, Indonesian Muslims and even Taiwanese Muslims are minorities; second, dakwa activities are still exclusive within the Indonesian Muslim community; third, lack of funding for dakwa activities; and fourth, minimal regeneration of Muslim youth. While external challenges are; stigmatized Islam from western perspective that

Islam is a radical religion which make Indonesian Muslims in Taiwan isolated and the Taiwanese government's views on religion that is considered part of culture, and so it is free to embrace or not embrace religion. It also implies to the lack of government attention to the religious community in Taiwan.

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