



# Polemic and Reasons for Reusing Wayang and Gamelan as A Medium for Contemporary Preaching Islam Religion in Central Java, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study aims to reveal the main reasons why *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets) and gamelan music were used again as tools of Islamic da'wah after the Wali Sanga era (Nine Saints). In Central Java (Banyumas, Solo, Demak, Pati), there has been a phenomenon of Islamic preaching and recitation performed by Kiai using *wayang kulit* and gamelan music. This study uses a phenomenological approach, which is to get an explanation of the apparent reality. This approach focuses on events that are seen as having an impact, polemic, and discourse on life. This study also uses a critical approach, looking critically at the phenomenon of -art- being researched to test how far the view that puts that wayang (and gamelan) is not by religious rules is accepted, rejected, and even opposed. The result shows that although da'wah using wayang and gamelan has sparked a lot of polemics, the use of wayang and gamelan music is considered more effective in spreading Islamic teachings to grassroots communities due to two factors. First, continuing the trace of tradition brought by the first Islamic missionaries in Java (Wali Sanga). Second, to make people aware, especially young santri (prospective preachers) or congregation today, realize that Islam is spread peacefully and without resistance through art.

**Keywords:** Islam, wayang, gamelan, da'wah, tradition, santri, pesantren

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2022, the people of Indonesia were shocked by the opinion of a well-known preacher, Khalid Basalamah, that *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets) performances are haram and, therefore, the existence of wayang must be destroyed (Ucu, 2022). His statement went viral and sparked a lengthy debate among the public. Contrary to this, some Kiai in Java views that Da'wah (preaching, which is an invitation or call to the way of God) can be done using a variety of mediums, some of

which include Javanese shadow puppet characters and gamelan.

Wayang, synonymous with the Mahabharata and Ramayana stories, was later changed to have an Islamic flavor. This reminds us of the story of Sunan Kalijaga (a member of the nine saints) in the mission of spreading Islam in Java (Ismurdyahwati, 2013). It is common information that Sunan Kalijaga uses wayang in his preaching.

Lukens-Bull (2008) said that the wayang was reinterpreted from a play with Hindu nuances. Even the shape and form of the wayang were changed (stylized) by

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Sunan Kalijaga, so they were not like humans because Islam forbids depicting a person's face and body. Such a mission is trying to be reproduced in a contemporary frame by some Kiai such as; Bintoro (Solo), Sun Haji (Banyumas), Mastur (Jepara), Ki Goro-Goro (Demak). The same thing also started to happen in East Java, which was pioneered by Ki Fadil (Sidoarjo). They are Kiai, ustad, or pesantren graduates who preach, and carry the mission and message of Islam through Javanese culture for their *santris* (in the pesantren environment), and the public in general.

In the life of the Javanese *santri* world, wayang and Music (gamelan) may become something foreign. However, not a few pesantren use wayang and Music as a means of preaching and entertainment (relaxation). The core meaning of the word *santri* is Islamic school students (Woodward, 2004, p. 119). In general, it is possible to distinguish between *santri* who practice ritualistic and mystical aspects of Javanese Islam and reformist *santri* who have close links to fundamentalist movements in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the "traditional" pesantren in Java can be categorized as a meeting room between the two poles of "Java and Islam" (Ricklefs, 2007).

*Santri*, believes that all the requirements of normative piety must be met to enter the mystical path. Most also think that the inner element of religious life is more important than the outward form. Geertz (1960, p. 126) even views traditional *santri* live in a solitary world. Moreover, the concept of *santri*, which stirs up Hindu, Javanese, and Islamic teachings, is currently considered to be something old-fashioned but can provide a balance of life as a stable Javanese human. More on this, Greetz added:

"Santri, who are very conservative, even though they are often called "orthodox" is actually not the most Islamic Javanese Muslims, but they are less than that. They create the minimum shift from traditional systems, where the animistic elements of Hinduism and Islam are found in stable equilibrium" Geertz (1960, p. 125).

Based on this view, such *santri*, wayang, and gamelan are indicated as relics of ancient Javanese teachings (Hinduism-Buddhism); in fact, they are used and are still preserved. We can trace this to Hairus Salim's writing "Pertemuan Wayang dan Pesantren: Pandangan Seorang Santri Terhadap Kesenian" (2003). However, the relationship between pesantren and the arts is often paradoxical and ambivalent.

On the one hand, art is supported and practiced as a valid daily expression. Especially after art is understood not only in terms of its aesthetic side but as part of religious expression; on the other hand, art is resisted and punished. This is especially true if art is considered an activity and expression that rivals and even go against the religious values believed to be (Salim, 2003). Furthermore, how can art be standardized based on religious values? How is art rejected and accepted by the religious community, especially the Kiai, the *santri*, and life in the pesantren? Hairus, in his research, tried to find this relationship by reading a part of the autobiography of Kiai Saifuddin Zuhri (Minister of Religion in the Demokrasi Terpimpin (Guided Democracy) era under President Soekarno [1962-1966], and Minister of Religion in the Ampera Cabinet under President Soeharto [1967]) in the book *Guruku Orang-Orang dari Pesantren* (1974). The book was published again by the LKiS publisher in 2012.

On the back of the book cover are comments from historian and cultural observer Kuntowijoyo, who said that the book was precious for knowing how the *santri* were familiar with wayang and gamelan. The comment is quite interesting because there is a clear affirmation of the familiarity of the *santri* with wayang and gamelan. The statement can also be read in a different light. First, the intimacy between *santri* and traditional Javanese art in the world of pesantren is considered something unusual or distant from the general public's life. In other words, wayang and gamelan are areas that are considered "public property" not belonging to the *santri* in the pesantren. Second, the exis-

tence of a statement of closeness between *santri* and traditional Javanese art shows that the power of traditional pesantren is not only formed in the dominance of religiosity in the form of sacred religious dogmas but looks flexible and acculturative.

Third, the relationship between the *santri* and the wayang-gamelan explains the pattern of continuing the tradition. For traditional *santri*, wayang and gamelan are considered part of religious preaching. No matter how strong the reforms in Islam are that reject all things that smell like traditionalism, these pesantren are still trying to hold on to the narrative or cult story about the Wali (Nasir, 2019). However, Hairus Salim's reading needs to be reinterpreted as important information, especially through Kiai Saifuddin Zuhri's autobiographical book in the 70s. That year, the polemic between the "right-wing" and "left-wing" who identified as a communist was still felt. Automatically, this affects people's perceptions of artistic life (Lekra: Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat [the People's Cultural Institute] under the Indonesian Communist Party) and the pesantren world. The affirmation of the closeness between *santri* and wayang or gamelan then became quite a sensitive issue, so it needed great consideration to express it at that time.

In addition to the references mentioned above, several previous studies that have discussed the relationship between art (especially local wisdom) and pesantren are Ma'sum, Triyanto, & Syarif (2018), Nurdianto, Joebagio, & Djono (2019), Fauzi (2019), Hudaeri, Karomah, & Al Ayubi, (2020), Patriadi, Bakar, & Hamat (2015). Almost all of these studies explain the local wisdom that is each region's main characteristic of pesantren. Of the many references, no one explicitly discusses the relationship between wayang and gamelan with pesantren and Kiai. It is in this context that this research is essential to do.

While Siti (2005) and Usulludin' (2003) studies try to offer a different novelty alternative, Siti explained that "art is not for art" because it must express spiritual dimensions, the principles of monotheism,

to guide humans to God's way. This type of art which, according to Usulludin, has not been widely available or created, even if there is one, is only an artistic expression that is not much different from the others (popular art). Both of these views seem to want to explain that the essential thing in the context of art is its spirituality. Whereas, in reality, on the field, the Kiai (in this study) are also playing in the area of aesthetics. One of them is by working on the musical side, which is quite riveting, wayang plays which are not only new but also full of creative humor. In other words, Islamic art, in the context of this research, is an attempt to juxtapose the spiritual side with the high aesthetic side; there is a balance between the two.

The main problem is a movement has emerged to reject the arts (traditional, especially wayang and gamelan) from being used to preach Islam. This research shows that there is resistance from the preachers. They use wayang and gamelan as a means of da'wah. The novelty of this study is to explain the findings of the strategy chosen by Islamic preachers in preaching using wayang and gamelan. The Kiai then had a large number of congregations and fans. This proves that efforts to weaken the traditional arts (wayang and gamelan) as a means of Islamic da'wah continue to be met with massive resistance

## METHOD

This study uses a phenomenological approach, placing phenomena as subjects to be read and interpreted further (Qutoshi, 2018). This approach focuses on events seen as having an impact, polemic, and discourse on life (Holroyd, 2001). In the analysis process, phenomenology is not based on hypotheses or assumptions (Sanders, 1982). This approach requires researchers to be further involved, observe, and take data directly on the phenomenon or subject of the study (Neubauer et al., 2019). In other words, the presence of researchers in the field is essential to prove whether the phenomenon is mere-

ly a usual social symptom or has further implications for the existing social order (Greening, 2019). The polemic about the prohibition of wayang (and gamelan) performances because they are considered inconsistent with Islamic religious norms is contrary to the phenomenon in grassroots society. Puppets and gamelan are used as an essential part of Islamic da'wah.

This study also uses a critical approach, looking critically at the phenomenon of -art- being studied (Geahigan, 1983) to test how far the view that puts that wayang (and gamelan) is not following religious rules is accepted, rejected, and even opposed. This can be observed from grassroots preachers (north coast of Java) trying to fight hegemony, namely preaching using wayang and gamelan. To get answers to questions such as; why do they do that? In addition to observation (Baker, 2006), interviews are essential (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2000). Interviews were conducted with preachers who use wayang and gamelan as part of their da'wah. The da'wah presentation became a show enjoyed by the public. Therefore, an ethnographic approach as an effort to understand a phenomenon is necessary (Humphreys & Watson, 2009). This is to find out to what extent da'wah with wayang and gamelan has received appreciation and even resistance from the public

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Experience Wayang and Gamelan

It is interesting to find out more about Kiai Saifuddin Zuhri's experience with the world of gamelan and wayang, especially in pesantren; here is his statement.

"In the pesantren, watching wayang is hardly contested about the law, haram or permissible. Some take the attitude of not permitting. It is not explained to what degree the impossibility of it, whether it is haram or makruh - with the argument of listening to exciting sounds until they are neglected from remembering Allah (*dzikrullah*). Even though not remembering Allah is haram. Besides, mixing between

men and women at night can lead to immoral acts. Some take the position of being allowed because it is said that wayang is the creation of the saints (*Wali Sanga*) in assimilating Hinduism into Islam. After all, one can take the essence of the lessons that are contained in wayang plays" (Salim, 2003).

Furthermore, although watching wayang or playing Music (gamelan) is against the law, it is not easy to choose whether it is haram or permissible. The problem then is that watching or playing the wayang all night long means that the *santri* have left their main task (reciting the Al Qur'an). The thing that was feared later was that the *santri* was too late and found the spectacle's ecstasy in the wayang show. Moreover, physical boundaries are often eliminated; men and women can mingle to watch without barriers. In the world of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), this is strictly avoided. But once again, the students still view and appreciate that this art is a legacy of Sunan Kalijaga. The award is not only in terms of forwarding and announcing presenting wayang in the world of pesantren but also reading books other than the Al Qur'an, such as the yellow book [*kitab kuning*] (Bruinessen, 1994). Moreover, wayang, teaching life guidance is not just a spectacle (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Ki Joko Goro-goro's "da'wah show" stage. (Photo: Setiawan, 2015)

Like most *santris*, Kiai Saifuddin's childhood at the pesantren was closely connected with the world of wayang. His father allowed him to watch the wayang but had to recite the Al Qur'an in the morning (Salim, 2003). As previously explained,

watching a wayang means emptying the recitation schedule; it must be replaced automatically. Moreover, little Saifuddin, when he was at the pesantren, explained to him that the five Pandawa figures (Yudistira, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sadewa) symbolized the pillars of Islam. Even the names of the wayangs are also trying to be connected in Islamic Arabic, such as Janaka, which means *Janatuka* (which means heaven), and Arjuna who gets a secret weapon called *Kalimasada*, which Muslims consider to be short for Sentence Shahadat (Lukens-Bull, 2008).



**Figure 2.** Ki Joko Goro-Goro using wayang as part of his preaching (Photo: Aris Setiawan, 2015)

Documentation of the photos in this study were taken from 2015 to 2017. However, da'wah activities using wayang and gamelan are still being carried out today (GM Media, 2022).

Wayang plays in the pesantren world do not only originate from the epics of Ramayana and Mahabarata. Ki Joko Goro-goro (personal communication, March 2015) explained that the puppet plays that were displayed had very Islamic nuances such as *Nggoleki Tapake Nabi Muhammad* (looking for the Prophet Muhammad's footprints), *Semar Ngislam* (Semar converted to Islam), *Pandawa Sholawat* (Pandawas converted to Islam), *Puntadewa dadi Ustad* (Puntadewa become a Kiai) and so on. Likewise, with the play that little Saifuddin watched, entitled *Bima Ngaji* (Bima reading the Al Qur'an). The world of wayang then influenced the *santri*, and little

Kiai Saifuddin, even he and his friends often imagined playing wayang at the Mushola. Some become *dalang* (puppeteer-masterminds) while accompanied by gamelan music using their mouths.

"Sometimes I imitated the puppeteers' stories when we were about to sleep at the Kiai Khudhori's Langgar (small mosque). We occasionally sleep together. When the night is quiet and the lights have been turned off, a friend imitates the puppeteer when telling a story. The various stories are imitated, the story of the birth of Gatotkaca, *Srikandi Meguru Manah*, or *Petruk Dadi Ratu*. If a friend pretends to be a puppeteer, the rest of us pretend to be gamelan musicians. Of course, the sound of the gamelan is sufficient by mouth. I've been appointed to be a pretend puppeteer. I kept telling stories; suddenly, my friends were all sleeping" (Salim, 2003).

However, it is not certain whether the position of the *santri* at that time (the 1920s) was merely a spectator or it was permissible to hold wayang performances as part of learning in the world of pesantren. By looking at the phenomenon that occurred in Kiai Saifuddin, it appears that the world of wayang is a favorite spectacle for students. Moreover, his teacher's opinions and statements that the wayang is a representation of Islamic teachings. The dynamics of pesantren life, especially those based on Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), are quite interesting to observe regarding students' concessions to watch and enjoy wayang puppets. Lukens-Bull (2008:4) even said that many Islamic boarding schools are the main sponsors of wayang performances, gamelan concerts, and other Javanese traditional arts. This means that puppets can be performed freely in Islamic boarding schools, such as when the Gontor Islamic Boarding School presented Ki Anom Suroto on its 90th birthday (2016).

The ambivalence of the relationship between wayang, gamelan, and pesantren triggered Abdurrahman Wahid to write an article entitled "Seorang Santri Menilik Pandawa Lima (A Santri Looks at Five Pandawas)" (March 24, 1988). He revealed

that wayang stories provide lessons or other teachings not found in pesantren. With a strong religious background (a descendant of NU's founder and a very respected Kiai), Abdurrahman Wahid tried to defend the wayang and gamelan performances.

As seen in Figure 1, there are words: Angeluri Buddhaya Jawi, Mangga Sami Ngaji, Ngugemi Agami, Manut Tak Lampahipun Para Wali (Preserving Javanese culture, let's recite the Koran, stick to Islam, and follow all the saints' actions). These words try to explain that the Islamic religion becomes more apparent if it adheres to the teachings of the Wali (nine people who are purified). In other words, the interpretation of the Al Qur'an verses and the prophet Muhammad's hadiths are easily understood by the people of Indonesia, and Java in particular, because of the struggles and existence of these saints.

The wayang (and gamelan) polemic in the pesantren world thus drew a lot of attention between the permissible and the forbidden, thus requiring well-known Kiai like Abdurrahman Wahid and Kiai Saifuddin to provide clarification with their respective versions and views. However, there are limits to what plays are "acceptable" to the *santris* and are not acceptable. Generally, *santris* like plays have powerful Islamic teachings compared to plays in general. Even to enter the world of pesantren, wayang plays often have to be changed or adjusted (Masroer Ch., 2015)



**Figure 3.** Santri and community the da'wah using wayang and gamelan at one of the pesantren in Pati (Photo: Aris Setiawan, 2017)

Regarding Music, resistance also accompanies it, but in certain contexts, Music

is more acceptable in the world of pesantren, such as the reading of Islamic songs sourced from *Albarzanji* (Ashari, 2012), *Sholawat* (Aryani, 2017), *Puji-pujian* (Said, 2018), and so on. Music in this context is considered an integral part of Islamic teachings because it can accommodate direct reading of the Al Qur'an verses. The most striking thing we can observe, for example, is in the performance or the Maiyah recitation conducted by Em Ha Ainun Najib (Cak Nun) with his Kiai Kanjeng gamelan group (Jamuin & Saputri, 2017). Cak Nun uses gamelan music to preach and sing Sufistic Islamic praises (Howell, 2001). Thus, the presence of Music can be felt more flexible and adaptive.

Handayani and Swazey (2018) explained that, in fact, pesantren is very democratic in terms of the arts, especially among the NU circles). As long as the logical reasons are well explained and beneficial to the people, pesantren will not reject it. However, according to Ki Joko Goro-goro (personal communication, March 2015), all must be sorted and selected for their meaning and philosophical values. The excess is that many pesantren graduates work as preachers using wayang and gamelan music.



**Figure 4.** Ki Joko Goro-goro used gamelan as a means of preaching (Photo: Aris Setiawan, 2016)

Regarding understanding gamelan's presence in the world of pesantren, it can be observed from the traces of contact between Islam, saints, and Gamelan Sekaten. In the footsteps of Islam's journey in Java, Gamelan Sekaten has become an

important element in terms of Music and its religious function (Rahayu et al., 2020). Gamelan Sekaten is made with jumbo size, five times bigger than ordinary gamelan, capable of generating loud sound echoes within a far radius. The local community became interested to see it. However, enjoying the Sekaten gamelan is not free. Local people have to perform ablution and read two sentences of the creed (*shahadat*) if they want to see and enjoy the Sekaten repertoire (Utami, 2011).

After the gamelan was played, Sunan Kalijaga preached, and the people consolidated themselves to convert to Islam. This is a method of spreading Islam in Java (Sulaeman, 2019). Gamelan Sekaten is used to commemorate Muhammad S.A.W.'s birthday for a whole week in front of the Great Mosque of Surakarta. Daryanto (2015) even mentioned that preaching using the Gamelan Sekaten had been carried out by saints since the Demak Kingdom's era in the 16th century. However, the existence of Gamelan Sekaten at that time was not known until now. The idea of using Gamelan Sekaten is the answer to the obstacles that arise when the saints spread Islam. At that time, the Javanese people had powerful beliefs in Hinduism and Buddhism. So, tools were needed to make the da'wah of Islam more attractive, and Sekaten was the answer to that (Waridi, 2006).

Sekaten itself comes from the word *syahadatain*, which means two sentences of the *shahada* (Rahayu et al., 2020). The two sentences of the creed are also symbolized by the two sets of Sekaten gamelan, which have the names Kiai Guntur Sari and Kiai Guntur Madu, which are placed on the south and north sides of the Masjid Agung (Great Mosque) of the palace. Two musical compositions (*gending*) are presented, namely *Rambu* and *Rangkung*. The Music was presented as a kind of musical concert, watched and enjoyed by people who had previously converted to Islam. It is said that the preaching of Sunan Kali Jaga accompanied it.

By looking at the history, the Kiai (as mentioned above) seem to find justificati-

on for the use of wayang and gamelan in their preaching, both within the pesantren environment and society in general. It is a practice of continuation of the same tradition that the saints had done. Ki Mastur (personal communication, May 2015) explained that da'wah using wayang and gamelan today is urgent to return Islam as a *rahmatan lil alamin*. Considering that currently, there are many anarchist events under the guise of religion, it is as if Islam is inhospitable, harsh, and cruel. Through wayang and gamelan, the Kiai tried to recall the importance of preaching Islam, which is more polite, respects others, and still adheres to the existing culture as in the early history of its spread. In other words, wayang and gamelan are symbols for peace-loving Islam.

#### Wayang and Gamelan for Preaching Islam

The first Islamic kingdom in Java was on the north coast, marked by the Great Demak mosque's construction. Ricklefs (1974, p. 17) said that the emergence of an Islamic kingdom in Java was dominated by "secular" monarchies who portrayed themselves as saints. At this point, the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms experienced a political decline and were subsequently taken over by the Islamic kingdom. Furthermore, when Java was colored with Islamic kingdoms, the Javanese king's title became "Sultan" or "Sunan" (Burdah, 2017). This is an effort to strengthen the religious mandate of Islam. In this area, then Islam is not only a partial religion or suddenly exists, but it needs missionaries who spread it. Missionaries are known as saints. Islam tries to be as flexible as possible so that there is no radical clash with Javanese culture, which previously embraced Hinduism-Buddhism.

This subtle way of spreading Islam is the marker and the beginning of Islam to be accepted peacefully. The method used is preaching through wayang (and gamelan). Even at this point, the assumption often raised is that art is changed and polished so that preaching can be carried out poli-

tely and does not cause conflict. Wayang is an important tool in this context. The *Wali Sanga* is considered to be the pioneer and the main originator of creative ideas of preaching through wayang and gamelan arts (Muljana, 2005). As a result, Islamic teachings did not become dogmatic rites but blended and became linked with Javanese culture. Automatically, Islam in Java has a unique side.

In this regard, Woodward (2004, p. 83) explained that the history of the linkage between Javanese and Islamic culture is still very obscure. The origins and spread of Islam in Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Java in particular) have never been written in full due to the lack of reliable reference sources (Lukens-Bull, 2008). As we know, for example, the Javanese belief that the *wayang kulit* form today is the result of the creativity of Sunan Kalijaga. However, there is no reference that clearly and accurately portrays the incident. As a result, Sunan Kalijaga has become a kind of "social myth" that is believed in its existence (Sumarsam, 2018, p. 132).

Sunan Kalijaga is very well known in Javanese culture. He is seen as one of the nine saints who performed many miracles. In shadow puppets, Sunan Kalijaga changes the shape or face of a leather puppet so that it does not resemble a human face. Islam forbids the depiction of human faces. *Wayang kulit* is also made to be more "strange" but unique (Sumarsam, 2018). Her hands and nose are too long, and her body is flatter. Islamic stories are included in the narrative of wayang stories. It is even said that a Javanese puppet story, Dewa Ruci, about Bima's journey to meet his Lord, was born. The story is outside the two major narratives, namely Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Javanese culture is a world of symbols. Wayang, with all the furniture and medium, are life symbol (Subiyantoro et al., 2020). Wayang plays are also full of meaning. Mystique, heroism, love, courage, and heroism are symbols of life disguised as wayang shadows in the drama-ry frame played by the puppeteer. This

proves that wayang is a world of symbols, only those who have "*landhep rasa*" (inner sensitivity) can decipher the symbols and their meanings behind the screen called "*kasunyatan*" or reality (Sumarsam, 2018).

It is Javanese philosophy that has formed the symbols in the wayang. It is realized that all the results of human thoughts and experiences in their journey toward perfection are a fixed pattern. Javanese philosophy is one of the philosophical traditions that has grown and developed in Indonesia and the accumulation of Javanese society's thoughts, experiences, and feelings, which have crystallized into a culture. This Javanese philosophy is embodied in the form of symbols in wayang performances (Mrazek, 1999).

Thus wayang performances are seen as a symbolic language of life that is more spiritual than outward. Such as Islamic practice, which emphasizes the transcendental aspect of religion rather than worldliness. So for people who love wayang, wayang performances are used as a guide for attitudes and actions, as is the Islamic perspective on the nature of life, the origin and purpose of life, the relationship between humans and God, humans and humans, and humans with nature (Soetarno, 2005). Based on this fact, art and religious lovers will truly appreciate the puppet show, listen to all the dalang's narratives of the puppets, and absorb all the essence of Islamic teachings manifested in wayang performances with a predetermined duration.

While in Music, there is a Latin term that reads, *Qui Bene Cantat Bis Orat*, which means whoever sings well, prays twice. In both Catholic and Christian religions, Music is used for dialogue with God, usually known as liturgical Music. In Hindu society, dialogue with God is also usually done by mouth music, usually called Mantra or commonly through *Pesantian*. People who believe in God Almighty in Java often have dialogues with God on certain days with oral Music, commonly called *Mamaca*. The people who believe in God Almighty in Batak, commonly known as *Parmalim*

use the *Gondang Sembilan* music to get closer to God.

Music does not only intersect with religious facilities. In the Nusantara tradition, Music plays a role in strengthening traditional institutions during ritual ceremonies. In the Dayak Banuaq community, the *Kelantan* music media, is used to accompany the *Belian Sentiu* ceremony. The Madurese people use the media of Music and singing to hold the *Sandhur Dhamong Ghardham* ceremony. The Madurese people ask for blessings from God so that their harvest from the sea can always be fulfilled. The Toraja people use a vocal musical instrument called *Ma'Badong* in the death rites of *Rambu Solok*. The combination of the typical Torajan dance and vocals is believed to be a means of praying so that God can accept people who die. Even *Ma'Badong* is an expression of the sad lament of those who are left behind. Thus, the existence of Music in the community that supports it is born to fulfill aesthetic fulfillment in the context of entertainment and fulfill religious needs.

With its universal language, Music can be a powerful means for organizing the "rites of life." Music is a language that all people can accept without the person having to know its contents verbally. Still, Music can convey various hopes and surrender to God Almighty's power as a servant of the weak (Fung, 2016).

Among the preachers of Islam themselves, Music has become familiar and commonplace for voicing religious calls (Cahyono et al., 2020). In Indonesia, there is Rhoma Irama (dangdut singer) who collaborated with Zainudin MZ (preacher) in the "Nada Dakwah" event. Bimbo and several other artists collaborated with preachers to entertain with religious calls. This collaboration became a cultural phenomenon in that era. Even during its golden age, this phenomenon reaped a high percentage of organizing more than non-preach music concerts, especially when religious celebrations had arrived. Let's say that the month of Ramadan was the moment of holding religious Music.

Apart from religious music development with pop nuances, nowadays there are many Islamic preaching that uses traditional Music, especially gamelan. Call it Ki Bintoro (Solo), Ki Sun Haji (Banyumas), Ki Mastur (Jepara), Ki Joko Goro-Goro (Demak), Ki Fadil (Sidoarjo). Also, see Emha Ainun Nadjib with Gamelan Kyai Kanjeng, Ki Enthus Susmono with Satriya Laras, Ki Junaedi through Gamalen Wayang Walinya, Ki Sukron Suwanda who, when preaching, uses the media of wayang and gamelan figures. Even the religious scholars with NU students' backgrounds packed wayang and gamelan into preaching dishes that were very attractive to the common people, entertaining and enlightening. Therefore, serving that involves gamelan in the preacher arena is recognized as something to captivate the public because it is an embedded culture that builds seriousness, not just the delivery of verbal and monotonous language. Still, it is interspersed with Music as a breaker or a freshener.

### Religious Music Polemic

Right-line Muslims argue that using Music actually leads to haram. Several prominent Islamic figures, such as Al Wahidy, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Imam Ibnu Katsir, stated that Music is unlawful (Sinaga, 2001). Imam Ibn Kathir, in his interpretation, explained that after Allah told about the condition of happy people in verses 1-5, namely those who received guidance from Allah's word and they felt that they enjoyed and benefited from reading the Qur'an. Allah told them in verse 6 about the miserable people who turn away from listening to the Qur'an and turn towards singing and Music. Abdullah bin Mas'ud is of the view that Music is something that is haram. Abdullah bin Abbas, who is nicknamed *Turjumanul Qur'an*, is convinced that the above verse explicitly prohibits the use of Music as a means of religion.

The position of Music in the content of the Al-Qur'an has not yet been found. The words *Musiqi*, *qhina*, or the same,

which involve the meaning of Music, are not found in the Qur'an (Choudhury, 1957). Not found a statement or a single word about Music in the Al Qur'an, which is direct and explicit, which identifies the concept of Music. However, those who reject Music base their argument on Allah's condemnation in QS 26: 224, which reads, "*Wasyusyū aro'u yattabi' uhmul ghowun*, "which means" And those poets, followed by evil people. " Those who forbid music agree that music is "useless speech" (*lahwal-hadith*), "something that sheds light" (*saamiduun*) and "contains false testimonies" (*adzadzuura*).

In contrast to the above view, many Muslims support that Music is commonplace in religion and even Music is a gift for life. They interpret the term beauty or soundness in the Qur'an as synonymous with Music. As noted by Choudhury (1957), according to his supporters, Music is nothing but melodious / and Music is nothing but tone poetry. Among the verses in the Al-Qur'an that music supporters often use or support their arguments are:

That "the beauty of sound" is mentioned in Al Qur'an sura 35: 1, with the following sound: *Yadzidu fil khal maa yasyaa* - Allah has added His creation according to His will, namely the beauty of sound.

That "sweet voice" is mentioned in Al Qur'an sura 30:15, with the following sound: *Fahum fii roudotim yuhbaruun* - They were rejoicing in the garden listening to beautiful songs from heaven.

Whereas the term "song" is mentioned in Al Qur'an sura 73: 4, with the following sound: *Warottil Qur'ana tartila* - And read the AL Qur'an with chanting.

Imam Al Ghazali shows QS-31: 19 as a verse that conceptualizes the understanding of Allah's praise for a beautiful voice, even though it is pronounced differently: "Indeed, the worst sound is the voice of a donkey" Choudhury (1957, p. 62).

Of all the arguments of the Qur'an and its views on Music, by music supporters as well as by those who reject the existence of Music, there is not a single word that directly or explicitly identifies the

concept of Music. In this case, Choudhury (1957, p. 64) commented that it is difficult to place Music in Islamic teachings properly. This means that the Qur'an does not say that Music is allowed or not, nor does it indicate anything that criticizes or allows Music. Thus, perhaps it can be said that whether or not a musical activity is allowed is an interpretation of the verses contained in the Al-Qur'an from people interested in Music.

The Qur'an does not clearly allow or prohibit Music, but what do the scholars think? In the book *Ihya Ulum Ad-din* (reviving religious sciences), a great scholar Imam Al Ghazali explained in Choudhury (1957, p. 64) that hearing song, namely "sweet voices," is permitted by Islamic teachings to understand that people who hear that sweet voice will get pleasure. A sweet voice is a blessing that Allah gives to his servant and one of the characteristics of a prophet, as narrated by Tarmidzi, which reads, "Allah Ta'ala did not send a prophet, but his voice was great."

According to AL Ghazali (Choudhury, 1957), the prohibition of hearing a sweet voice was not due to the beauty of the sound itself, but due to something outside it, the context of "who makes the sound," "who listens" to the voice. The context of the prohibition put forward by AL Ghazali is explained as follows:

If the person making Music is the opposite sex from the listeners (with a note that it is permissible for them to be married according to Islam), then this is prohibited because they are worried that sexual desire will arise, which is something that is prohibited in Islamic teachings. In this context, AL Ghazali also explained that singing has advantages that can move sexual desire (Choudhury, 1957, p. 64-65).

Those who listen make singing their custom and way of life to take their time from other tasks, such as religion. According to AL Ghazali, this is forbidden because anything done excessively is prohibited (Choudhury, 1957, p. 64-65).

Musical instruments are used as symbols. According to AL Ghazali, drin-

kers of *khamar* (a type of drink that contains alcohol) are Iraqi *serunai*, fiddle, and instruments that symbolize people who liken themselves to women (*mukhannats*), namely long drums with small centers [domes]. According to AL Ghazali, the Iraqi *serunai*, the *rebab*, and the dome are prohibited instruments. Muslims consider *khamar* drinkers and *mukhannats* to be sinners, and anything that has become their tradition is also prohibited from being imitated (Jähnichen, 2012).

Songs contain bad, vile, insulting words and lies against Allah, the Prophet, and his friends. According to AL Ghazali, this was forbidden both for those who made it and those who heard it. Likewise, texts that characterize the shape of a woman's body and other things contain things that are haram (Jähnichen, 2012).

From the explanation put forward by AL Ghazali, it can be said that a melodious voice or singing in the context of Music is allowed in Islam's teachings (Susetyo, 2005). The prohibition against melodious voices or singing is caused by negative things prohibited by Islam, which are associated with these musical activities.

Based on the above understanding, it seems that Islamic preachers in Central Java (Bintoro [Solo], Sun Haji [Banyumas], Mastur [Jepara], Ki Goro-Goro [Demak]) are positioning themselves to use the positive side of wayang and gamelan. The positive side places wayang and gamelan as a catalyst in making da'wah easier to be accepted.

Wayang and gamelan function more as media, not subjects that are the main focus of the problem. Thus, wayang and gamelan are considered as means that only deliver da'wah to be more accepted and understood, especially by grassroots communities. Its main essence is in the content of the da'wah, not in the wayang and gamelan. The story of the harmonious relationship between wayang-gamelan and Kiai Saifuddin Zuhri in the world of pesantren shows that traditional arts are generally well accepted as long as they

have a strong positive impact.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it is seen as a whole that Music is an important part of a religious message, apart from all the polemics that accompany it. Inside the pesantren walls, the contact between *santri*, wayang, and gamelan has long historical traces. However, it must be admitted that the relationship between pesantren and art (Music) is often paradoxical and ambivalent. On the one hand, art is supported and practiced as a valid daily expression. Moreover, art is understood not only from an aesthetic point of view but also in terms of the expression of the spread of Islamic teachings, such as in the history of the saints in preaching. But on the other hand, art is resisted and punished. Especially if art is considered an expression that goes against the religious values that art believes in; in this context, wayang and gamelan (Music) are more aesthetic expressions so that the public can accept preaching and have a mission to raise awareness about peace-loving Islam. These are the reasons why many Kiai preach using puppets and gamelan.

The results of this study indicate that the rejection of wayang and gamelan in the latest Islamic discourse has a fairly elementary error, namely focusing solely on material forms, not on the essence of the da'wah conveyed. The polemic related to this is due to a lack of basic understanding of the traces of contact between Islam and Java that take place flexibly in positioning wayang and gamelan as catalysts so that da'wah can take place ideally.

The Kiai, who became the object of this research, carried out a massive movement using wayang and gamelan in preaching to win the hearts of the grassroots community. The implication is two-fold. Firstly, the essence of da'wah can be accepted easily. Second, traditional arts, which in this context, wayang, and gamelan, can continue to be sustainable.

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