

## Ethnography of Dakwah in Bontang

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to find the assimilation of Indonesian culture that carries the interests of preaching in industrial areas. The ethnics of Indonesia archipelago has succeeded in confirming and transforming dakwah in Bontang. Professional struggles in the industrial world brought about the ethnological civilization of dakwah, which provided a spirit of independence in the ijihad of ulama to establish religious icon of Bontang as the City of Tahfiz. The struggling to make the Al-Quran the main guideline for technological and industrial guidance gave birth to creativity in preaching to do good and prevent evil. The ethnographic research approach, using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, succeeded in explaining dakwah in Bontang by ethnic diversity but within the framework of the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika ideology. The results of the study show that the missionary task succeeded in uniting the cultures of the archipelago in Bontang, because the missionaries faced the same challenge, namely moral improvement through the establishment of educational, zikir and salawat institutions.

**Keywords:** culture, education, and preaching

**Permalink/DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.18326/infsl3.v18i1.159-174>

## Introduction

Since 1970, gas mining and fertilizer industry companies have begun operating in Bontang, East Kalimantan Province (Endrarjo, 2022; Akbar and Purnomo, 2019; Henrico, Anwar, and Dama, 2020; Nisaa & Fawzi, 2023). An increasing number of workers are entering the region to find work with a decent income (Akhdan, Sardjono, and Kristiningrum 2023). The immigrants came from various regions in Indonesia, mostly from agricultural family professions. The transition to industrial work encourages cultural confusion, resulting in changes in behavior from nomadic to urban (Budiman & Antariksa, 2023).

Migrants from various regions in Indonesia have been coming to Bontang, as job vacancies opened in several companies, such as PT Pupuk Kaltim and PT Badak LNG. News of the success of the migrants brings sweet stories to their hometowns, thereby attracting a wave of migrants, who then form an urban settlement. Income from companies is able to improve the family's standard of living, so that along with fulfilling income and economic viability, as well as social and cultural stability, the search for spiritual needs also increases (Lahuri, Pauji, & Zuhro, 2022).

Racial, ethnic and religious diversity reflects its uniqueness and complexity and the existence of a multicultural society provides added value in national life (Berray, 2019; Lambelanova & Toyib, 2024; Murchison & Coats, 2015). Indonesia's multicultural society is based on the ideology of multiculturalism as outlined in the official state motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which underlies the structural characteristics of Indonesian society at the national and local levels. Factors causing the emergence of a multicultural society are geographical conditions, culture, religion and customs. Thousands of islands stretch from West to East, from Sumatra to Papua. Each island has a different mix of ethnicities, religions and races (Mashuri, 2024a; Suri & Chandra, 2021; Ali, Arifin, & Muttaqin, 2022)

The moslem sociologist Ibnu Khaldun said that farmers' behavior often moves, because the area they are targeting provides the potential for good agricultural results. The activity of moving or nomadic life is called *badawab*. Humans continue to move with

the dynamics of developing instincts, always targeting development areas that provide residential facilities. Development activities are called the *umran* civilization, giving rise to move from village to city areas called *urban*. Meanwhile, permanent facilities are called *badarah* (Nawawi and Harahap, 2024; Muslimin, 2019; Munafiah, et al., 2024).

Bontang, which is an industrial development area, provides income benefits for workers with higher wages compared to agricultural income. Fulfillment of needs has been achieved so that they are able to send money and goods to the workers' home areas. The atmosphere of Bontang, which is an urban area, provides various needs, from food, clothing, shelter, to entertainment. Information about providing entertainment needs in this city has spread to various regions in the country, giving rise to concerns from various parties, that there will be a reduction in moral values and faith (Constant et al., 2023). The public figures of Bontang immediately consolidated their missionary work with *ulama* in various regions, to come to preach or send missionaries. For decades, scholars, preachers and *ustaz* have come and lived in Bontang.

The *muballigs* desire to develop *dakwah* in Bontang is always influenced by regional feeling in form *dakwah* organizations. *Muballigs* from South Sulawesi formed *Badan Koordinasi Dakwah Islam Bontang* (BKDIB), *Masyarakat Cinta Masjid* (MCM), *Lembaga Dakwah As'adiyah*, and *Darul Dakwah wal Irsyad* (DDI). *Muballigs* from Java encouraged Muhammadiyah as *dakwah* institutions, *Nahdlatul Ulama*, *zikr* and *shalawat* institutions. *Muballigs* from Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah Balikpapan, tends to strengthen Hidayatullah's preaching network.

The atmosphere of cross-ethnic *dakwah* occurs because of the presence of large companies, which actively provide assistance to *dakwah* institutions. Humans at the point of achieving the necessities of life, always unite in a system of shared destiny. The missionaries view that the muslim community of Bontang has adopted a pluralistic egalitarian culture. Inter-ethnic marriages are intimately established, so that kinship relations within the family adhere to natural human principles. That all humans have a sense of

empathy that cannot be limited by social classes (Ismail, 2023; Yadi, 2023; Syahputri, & Fathoni, 2023).

Along with the development of Bontang society that blends with the technological and industrial systems, ethnocentric faces increasingly experience modernity. Modernity is characterized by an emphasis on rationality and control, by organization through supervision, and by an emphasis on the nation state as a means of controlling social life. Modernity is also characterized by the importance of expert knowledge such as science. Modernity has several main technologies, namely timekeeping, work calendars, maps, and computers (Hine, 2001).

Several research problems were revealed in this study (Sharma & Sarkar, 2019). Diversity of ethnic-based preaching, inter-ethnic intermingling of missionaries, cultural assimilation in the diversity of preaching in Bontang. Ethnographic research on *dakwah* in Bontang presents an academic presentation of industrial religious culture. A research result that shows an industrial culture society, but still insists on religious guidelines. Innate regional traditions (Wang, 2023; Berray, 2019; Saputra, 2018), are still implemented in Bontang, so that moderation in religious life is maintained, which has a good impact on the stability of industrial workers.

## Methods

This type of research is a qualitative field study with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method (Kjellström & Mitchell 2019). The research was conducted with community participation in a social or community scope to create action for change towards the better. In this study, the author collected data based on facts in the field related to the research theme raised, namely the togetherness of religious religious clerics in developing *dakwah* in Bontang. The author collected data from informants whose daily lives are directly in touch with the development of *dakwah*. These informants include scholars, clerics, and the community. They are actors in *dakwah* activities who always convey goodness and try to prevent bad or evil from happening.

The data collection techniques used in this study are interview, observation, and documentation techniques. In the interview

technique, the author conducted direct interviews with the leaders of Islamic boarding schools and community organization figures. While in observation, the author observed various cross-ethnic events in da'wah activities, both *dakwah bil lisan*, *dakwah bil hal*, and *dakwah bil kalam*. *Dakwah bil lisan* is spoken to audience including lectures, religious studies, and *tabligh*. *Dakwah bil hal* is material event including physical development activities and providing assistance to people in need. While *dakwah bil kalam* is the publication of books, bulletins, prayers, *zikir*, and *salawat*.

Likewise, the documentation technique is carried out to trace various documents related to the arrival of industrial workers, traders, and farmers from various ethnicities in Indonesia. The data obtained will be analyzed using data condensation analysis techniques that summarize and simplify the data that has been collected so that it can be stated about the potential of *dakwah* bases with a background of ethnic diversity.

## **Result and Discussion**

*Muballigs* from Javanese, Bugis, Makassar, Banjar, Sundanese, and Mandar ethnicities came to Bontang to pursue the profession of preaching, as an access to instill the spiritual power of religious obedience for industrial workers. Industrial workers who are of the same ethnicity as the preachers make it easier to communicate preaching. Social dynamics lead the preachers to build educational, preaching, and social institutions as an effort to broadcast Islam permanently. Support from entrepreneurs and companies to the preachers leads to increasingly good institutional dynamics.

In 1980, Haji Junaid Kasim, who was of Bugis ethnic background, went to Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, inviting *ulama* to come to preach in Bontang. Anregurutta Haji Junaid Sulaiman, who then came to Bontang to deliver Islamic material about happiness in this world and the hereafter. Many of the possessions and property owned by humans may not necessarily lead their owners to be happy and safe in the afterlife. Haji Junaid Kasim, a successful businessman and Bontang community figure, received advice from Anregurutta Haji Junaid Sulaiman to invite young *ulama* from Bone. In 1987 – 1992, periodically and alternately, two teachers at Pondok

Pesantren Ma'had Hadis Watampone, Kyai Muda Jamaluddin Abdullah and Kyai Muda Abdul Aziz Rajmal went to Bontang, for Ramadhan Holy Month, *Khatib* of Eid al-Fitr, *Khatib* of Eid al-Adha, *Khatib* of Friday, and Islamic discussions.

Awareness of practicing Islamic teachings for Bugis migrants in Bontang continues to develop towards an institutional system so that dakwah activities run in a planned and systematic manner. A popular place for preaching interaction in society is the mosque. Mutual cooperation to build a place of worship and dakwah was realized with the construction of the Al-Hijrah Mosque in Bontang in 1990. With the presence of this facility, the continuation of dakwah activities continued by bringing in preachers from Bone Regency, South Sulawesi Province.

Abraham Maslow proposed a hierarchy of human needs, if it has been reached at a certain level, it will move again to another hierarchy so that instinctive human satisfaction can be achieved. There are five hierarchies of human needs, namely: (1) Physiological needs, which include air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex and sleep. (2) Security needs, people want to experience order, predictability and control in life. (3) The need for love and belonging, refers to human emotional needs for interpersonal relationships, affiliation, connectedness, and being part of a group. (4) Esteem needs are the fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy and include self-esteem, achievement, and respect. (5) Self-actualization needs are the highest level in the hierarchy which refers to realizing one's potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth, and peak experiences (Trivedi & Mehta 2019).

Continuity of *dakwah* activities, continued permanently by alumni of Islamic boarding schools in South Sulawesi. The alumni were facilitated by entrepreneurs and Bontang City officials to establish and maintain Islamic boarding schools. In 2002, Ustaz Fatman Marzuki, an alumnus of the Ma'had Hadis Watampone Islamic Boarding School, Bone Regency, came and lived in Bontang. The joy of the Bontang Muslims was marked by the initiative to help the ustaz establish the *Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah wal Qurra* Tanjung Laut Village, South Bontang District. Until 2010, this Islamic

boarding school was a gathering place for teachers who came from South Sulawesi who intended to live and serve in Bontang.

Ustaz Fatman Marzuki explained the *dakwah* activities in Bontang involving preachers from South Sulawesi as follows.

*Cultural similarities with people from South Sulawesi, who are generally Bugis, so preachers who come from the same area develop their preaching very quickly. The Bugis people, who always carry out ritual celebrations such as birth, marriage and death celebrations, of course really like that those who come are preachers who deliver remembrances and prayers which are then translated into Bugis language (Interview, Informant 01, December 2023).*

The dynamics of *dakwah* has penetrated the education sector, several ustaz who gathered at the *Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah wal Qurra*, transferred to other Islamic boarding schools. Ustaz Ahmad Rayyani leads the *Pondok Pesantren Arrahman Darul Dakwah wal Irsyad* in Bontang Lestari Village, South Bontang District. Ustaz Haji Abdul Syukur, head of the *Pondok Pesantren Darul Hikmah* in Tanjung Laut Village, South Bontang District, Bontang.

The institutional and infrastructure of *dakwah* in Bontang, historically and anthropologically, includes and combines three layers of entities, namely: (1) Mentifact, which includes values, beliefs, thoughts, ideas and general outlook. (2) Socifact, that is, when ideas, values and thoughts enter the social world, they will form groups, organizations, schools of thought, denominations, sects, associations, communities, organizations along with accompanying institutions and behavior, attitudes, and complex patterns of relationships and social interactions. (3) Artifact, the relationship between the two is realized and symbolized in the physical world, such as buildings for places of worship, institutions (social, religious, educational, economic and cultural), manuscripts, manuscripts, books, inscriptions, art objects, tools of worship, music, paintings, laboratories, means of transportation, ritual objects, tombs and so on (Abdullah, 2014).



PT Pupuk Kaltim (Sobary, 2001) and PT Badak LNG (Henrico, 2017), two State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) operating in Bontang also participate in religious social charity by supporting missionary institutions. Building mosques in company areas also expands *dakwah* efforts by building educational institutions. The flow follows the company scheme which always gives birth to multiplier effect. Missionary business of PT Pupuk Kaltim is the Yayasan Baiturrahman, which houses an institution Rumah Quran Baiturrahman. Students are provided with dormitory facilities to memorize the Al-Quran for three years. Some educational assistance includes free boarding fees, free school fees, three meals a day, toiletries and health services. Financing for *dakwah* activities within the company is carried out by the Unit Pengumpul Zakat Pupuk Kaltim (UPZ PKT) which obtains permission from the Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (BAZNAS) state institution.

*Yayasan Baiturrahman* in PT Pupuk Kaltim collaborates with the leadership of *Pondok Pesantren Al-Quran Dusturana* Bandung, in organizing the *Rumah Quran Baiturrahman*. Matters being collaborated include the management of *tahfiz* education according to the national education system, innovation in the Al-Quran education curriculum, dormitory management, and the assignment of teacher to develop students who memorize the Al-Quran.

Furthermore, PT Badak LNG provides a great opportunity for the people of Bontang to manage of the *Masjid Al-Kautsar* by forming the *Yayasan Umat Islam* (YAUMIL). This foundation has the charity business *Unit Pengumpul Zakat* (UPZ) Yaumil, *Taman Kanak-Kanak Al-Kautsar*, *dakwah* training, religious training for housewives, and the *Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja Balai Pembinaan Pelatiran Kerja Mustabiq* (LPK BPPKM) Yaumil in Kanaan Village, West Bontang.

Strengthening *dakwah* among women is carried out by providing Islamic material and providing economic assistance. Ummi Khomsiyah, a female figure from Magetan, East Java, appeared to organize various activities at the organization *Muslimat Nabdlatul Ulama*, Bontang. Elderly women are a group vulnerable to health and economic problems, so actual *dakwah* treatment is the right choice.



*Our missionary path is to make efforts to support less fortunate mothers. We collect assistance from various parties to distribute it to people in need. Elderly mothers are people who have contributed to the lives of the people of Bontang City, but over time, they are in a weak position. For this reason, we build the power of assistance to encourage the enthusiasm for life of mothers or grandmothers (interview, informant 02, 2 January 2024).*

Ummi is a Javanese woman who cares about other women. She works together with cross-cultural women figures so that there appears to be a collaborative momentum, which is able to make social activities a success. Fundraising from entrepreneurs, companies, and the government is well managed so that it is able to provide social assistance and further strengthen social relations in the community (Beljanski & Bukvić, 2020).

At this stage, the perspective of multiculturalism as an approach to managing Indonesia's national diversity is not only limited to recognizing regional, religious, political and cultural differences as a sociological reality of society, but is also a strategy for communicating diversity through interactions between people. culture on the basis of equality, without mutual hegemony over each other (Sabiq, Arisnawawi, Murni & Iskandar, 2023). Building a society that provides equal opportunities for everyone requires individuals who are ready to coordinate their needs with the needs of others, make decisions while still respecting the traditions, customs and values of themselves and other people. others (Mashuri, 2024b).

The building of *Masjid Al-Wahhab* in Bontang has displayed ethnographic facts about preaching. The shape of the building is a combination of Bugis, Kalimantan, Demak and Sumatran cultures. This mosque was then built and repaired by a number of migrants from the Bajau, Bugis and Kutai tribes, who lived on the coast of Bontang. This house of worship was founded in 1789 AD, and was originally called the Api-Api Mosque. Because it is located in Api-Api, it has now become Api-Api Village, North Bontang. In the early days of the arrival of the migrants, together with the Muslim community in general, Masjid Al-Wahhab became a place

of worship. The means of transportation is by boat, because there are no land roads available (Daffa et al, 2023).

The community to controls the market and they can be said to adhere to the teachings of Islam. They pray on time, fast and feel the social and religious meaning of the *riyaya* (holiday) events. In the section describing the religious life of this social group, Geertz reconstructs the history of the spread of Islam and the dynamics of Islamic thought, which ultimately resulted in the growth of two prominent social and religious organizations, NU and Muhammadiyah. He tells stories about Islamic boarding schools and schools based on Islam and so on (Abdullah, 2014 ; Handoko & Susilo, 2022).

The pattern of Islamic community organization in *dakwah* and education at *NU, Muhammadiyah, Darul Dakwah wal Irsyad, Hidayatullah, As'adiyah*, which was initially based on ethnicity, then gave rise to a spirit of professional *dakwah* among the missionaries of Bontang. The establishment of Islamic boarding schools always follows the performance of religious leaders, who design Islamic religious learning by following the education patterns of their alumni (Ahsan, 2024; Lestari, 2023, Agustin, 2019).

Ishlahuddin Syuaib Yasdaf, an alumnus of the *Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Huda Lasem*, Central Java Province, is actively establishing the Pondok Pesantren Darul Furqon in Bontang City, which is characterized by students memorizing Al-Quran

*The characteristics of Bontang City as one of the cities with extraordinary industrial activity requires an educational institution that can cover everything. Not only academic but also religious as the foundation of the current generation. For that, we present the choice of Darul Furqon educational institutions, as a form of our responsibility and devotion to the community (interview, informant 03, January 5, 2024).*

The diversity of views of the preachers in Bontang, then united under the auspices of a joint organization, namely the *Badan Koordinasi Dakwah Islam Bontang* (BKDIB). The organization funded by the Bontang Government occupies an activity office at

the Masjid Agung Al-Hijrah, Bontang. The spirit of preaching of the preachers to convey Islamic teachings to their followers with an ethnocentric approach.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of research on the diversity of ethnic backgrounds of *muballigs* in Bontang, as a reinforcement of the study on the ethnography of *dakwah*, several conclusions can be presented. The Indonesian ethnic groups inhabiting the islands of Sulawesi and Java have a paradigm of Islamic knowledge with the titles of *ustaz*, *muballig*, *wali*, and *ulama*. These professions are the ones who come to Bontang to convey Islamic teachings, either through lectures, sermons, to the establishment of *dakwah* institutions and Islamic boarding schools. Two state-owned companies, PT Pupuk Kaltim and PT Badak LNG utilize Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for the development of *dakwah* in Bontang. Mosques in the company environment also participate in organizing Islamic education activities, by building Al-Quran memorization institutions, *taklim* assemblies, and other *dakwah* activities.

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