Unveiling Muhammadiyah's Cultural Da'wah: An Ethnographic Exploration at PCM Kasihan, Yogyakarta

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Abstract:

This ethnographic study examines Muhammadiyah's grassroots cultural da'wah via PCM Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta (2023–2024), revealing how this puritanical movement negotiates and transforms Javanese culture. Grounded in cultural da'wah, Dahlanism (selective-accommodative-transformative strategy of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan), and purification-accommodation dialectics (Geertz, Malinowski), it deploys participant observation, interviews, FGDs, and thematic analysis of da'wah interactions. Findings highlight Dahlanism's success: accommodating Javanese calendars/Krama in rituals; repurposing yasinan/tahlilan for Qur'anic education; maslahah-driven cultural partnership. Challenges include balancing purity with tradition and cadre hesitancy; recommendations advocate integrating the model into central training and inter-branch forums. Contributions: empirical micro-portrait of da'wah; theoretical sharpening of Dahlanism beyond puritan-traditional binaries for modern Islamic locality strategies.

Keywords: cultural accommodation; Ethnography; Javanese culture; Muhammadiyah; Puritanism.

Introduction

The notion that Muhammadiyah is an anti-cultural Islamic organization still clings to the Muhammadiyah da'wah movement. At least the characteristics of the Muhammadiyah da'wah movement, as outlined in the Muhammadiyah Progressive Islamic Message are stated as the da'wah movement of good deeds and forbidding evil (PP Muhammadiyah, 2023). The meaning of good deeds and forbidding evil is sometimes understood as uprightness in the Qur'an and Sunnah, without any tolerance for cultural aspects. Still remember Kuntowijoyo's criticism of Muhammadiyah, who stated that Muhammadiyah is a cultural movement without culture. This means that Muhammadiyah's relationship with culture is still far from being an integral part of its da'wah system (Kuntowijoyo, 1991).

This view has been refuted by Ahmad Najib Burhani in his book Muhammadiyah Jawa. Burhani explains that Muhammadiyah's birth within the walls of the Yogyakarta palace demonstrates that Muhammadiyah is an authentic Javanese Islamic movement. This evidence is further strengthened by the position of early Muhammadiyah members, including Ahmad Dahlan, who, until the end of his life, was a servant in the Yogyakarta palace. Another proof that Muhammadiyah is an Islamic cultural movement is Kyai Dahlan's active involvement in palace events, such as Grebek and Sekaten, which combine Javanese traditions with Islamic elements.

Even in his daily life, Kyai Dahlan still wears traditional Javanese clothing rather than Arabic attire during his preaching activities. Kyai Dahlan always wears traditional Javanese clothing in Islamic preaching activities in the early days of Muhammadiyah's founding. The strongest thing that Muhammadiyah has in common with culture is Kyai Dahlan's active involvement in the Budi Utomo organization which is based on Javanese culture, further strengthening the fact that Muhammadiyah is an authentic Javanese Islamic movement (Burhani, 2010).

The paradox of Muhammadiyah's da'wah movement is an interesting phenomenon that warrants continuous examination to identify the common ground between the two. The historical reality of Muhammadiyah, a purifying movement for pure Islam, and the shift in thinking within Muhammadiyah itself that accommodates local culture, are interesting facts to study. The birth of cultural da'wah is Muhammadiyah's cultural effort to accommodate local cultural contexts. However, it is not certain that Muhammadiyah members nationally immediately implement the concept of cultural da'wah.

Long before the birth of the Muhammadiyah cultural da'wah concept, Mulkhan had provided a sociological overview of Muhammadiyah in his study in Wuluhan Jember, East Java. In his study, Mulkhan provided four variants of Muhammadiyah. The first puritan variant (al-Ikhlas) typology is a group that consistently carries out the purification of Islam according to the Quran and Sunnah. So the typology of this movement is anti-TB practices tend to be selective and strict in carrying out religious life. The second variant is the Ahmad Dahlan variant, this group tends to be tolerant of local cultural practices. This second group is not directly anti-culture and does not easily accuse heresy in religious practices that develop in society. The main characteristic of this second variant is that it reflects the personality of Kyai Dahlan who is indeed tolerant and accommodating to local culture. The third variant is the Muhammadiyah-N (Munu) group. This variant is Muhammadiyah members who in their religious practices still maintain religious traditions such as NU. They still carry out Yasinan, tahlilan, salawatan, grave pilgrimages, and so on. The fourth variant is the Marmud type (Marhaenist-Muhammadiyah). This type does not question the details of religious practices. Instead, it tends to focus on political movements and leadership in the realm of practical politics and tends to be inspired by Bung Karno's political thoughts (Mulkhan, 2010).

The Jakarta Muhammadiyah Congress produced the formulation of the Islamic Life Guidelines for Muhammadiyah Members (PHIWM). One of its consensuses discussed Muhammadiyah's cultural guidelines. The follow-up to the Jakarta Muhammadiyah Congress was the Jakarta Tarjih National Conference, which produced the formulation of cultural da'wah. This represents Muhammadiyah's conceptual progress in framing its relationship with culture as part of its da'wah system. In the PHIWM, Muhammadiyah explains:

> "First, Islam is a natural religion, a religion characterized by teachings that do not conflict with human nature. Second, the sense of art as an embodiment of the sense of beauty in humans is a natural thing that Allah has bestowed on every human being. Third, based on the results of the 1995 Aceh Tarjih National Conference, works of art are permissible as long as they do not lead to facade, dlarar, isyyan (disobedience), and ba`id annillah. Fourth, fine art in the form of living creatures is permissible if used as a tool for education and is forbidden if it contains elements of isyyan (disobedience) and polytheism. Fifth, vocal and instrumental art are basically permissible and can become forbidden if they lead to violations of Islamic norms. Sixth, every Muhammadiyah member in creating and enjoying art and culture is expected to cultivate refined feelings and make art and culture a means of getting closer to Allah and making art and culture a medium of da'wah. Seventh, reviving Islamic literature as part of building Islamic civilization and culture (PP Muhammadiyah, 2023).

Research conducted by Rifai, which examines cultural da'wah dialogue in the 1445 H Ramadan study program, shows that Muhammadiyah has become more inclusive and adaptive in its cultural integration. Muhammadiyah views culture not as a threat but as an integral part of its da'wah. Through YouTube social media, Muhammadiyah promotes an integral view of the relationship between religion and culture within the framework of cultural da'wah. This research

also emphasizes the importance of maintaining cultural authenticity and Muhammadiyah is expected to be able to balance culture with the religious principles it holds (Rifai & Rahman, 2025).

While conceptually, Muhammadiyah already has a standard formulation regarding cultural da'wah, which discusses da'wah within a cultural context, this research serves as a confirmation of the reality of Muhammadiyah activities at the grassroots level. The chosen research location is the Muhammadiyah Branch Leadership (PCM) of Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta. The researcher aims to explore the implementation of cultural da'wah at the grassroots level and to determine whether there is a cultural connection in Muhammadiyah da'wah at the grassroots level.

The relationship between religion and culture is a dialectical relationship between religion and culture, ultimately leading to the formation of a new culture, the transformation of an existing one, or the formation of a pattern of acculturation between religion and culture (Aronoff, 2024). The dialectic between religion and culture among Muslims has begun to produce subjective and sometimes derogatory views. On the one hand, some groups are passionate about preserving religion from the possibility of acculturation with local culture. On the other hand, others seek to establish a pattern of dialogue between the two. However, despite the diverse understandings, the reality is that religion is increasingly moving towards a process of acculturation, even towards interfaith syncretism. This can be seen in the phenomenon of changes in patterns of religious understanding and religious behavior itself (Luckmann et al., 2022).

A relevant theoretical approach to examining religion and culture is the classical theory proposed by Geertz. In his view, religion is not merely a personal belief; it has a broader meaning, becoming a system of symbols. To understand religion, Geertz argues that we must be able to interpret the symbols that appear in that religion. Religion is understood as a system of symbols that acts to establish strong, pervasive, and enduring moods and motivations in humans, by formulating concepts of a general order of existence and wrapping these concepts in an aura of factuality so that the moods and motivations appear highly realistic (Geertz, 1973).

A study conducted by Koko Abdul Qadir on the Cikondang indigenous community in Lamajang Village, Pangalengan District, revealed that Geertz's idea of religion as a cultural system is a value system that applies to local community culture, providing meaning and religious values both textually and contextually. Thus, religion is used as a tool for interpreting the culture that develops in the Cikodang community. The results of this interpretation produce meaning in symbol systems and value systems. Therefore, Geertz's concept can be obtained the relationship between culture and religion in the cultural interpretation of symbols and their meanings contained in religious rites and customs (Qodir, 2012).

Following Geertz's model, it can be interpreted as a human way of giving meaning to the world. Religion, as an analogy, provides a framework containing norms, values, and rules, while culture is the place where these ideas are realized in everyday life. The interplay of values conveyed by religion and those adopted from customs and traditions that have developed within society. This intersection is what constitutes the intersection of religion and culture. According to Geertz's framework, religion and culture are an inseparable whole (Cossu, 2021).

Another approach that can be used to examine the relationship between religion and culture is Malinowski's functionalism theory. In his view, religion can fulfill the psychological needs of society. One of religion's practical functions in life, in the psychological aspect, is to reduce stress levels. Malinowski further explained that religious rituals are not merely a form of obedience to God but also a medium of communication between humans and God, which can create a sense of security and self-control. In his essay, Malinowski explained that primitive societies use religion as a foundation of knowledge and apply beliefs to the culture held by a society. If under certain conditions and considered dangerous, magic is the path taken by society to achieve certain goals. Therefore, Malinowski's main idea is that religion can provide peace and avoid anxiety. In addition, religion is an instrument that lives in the human value system and culture (Malinowski, 1948).

To understand the relationship between culture and religion in the context of Muhammadiyah's da'wah, it is also necessary to understand the concept of cultural da'wah.

Muhammadiyah understands cultural da'wah as a form of da'wah that promotes good deeds and forbids evil, while taking into account the potential and needs of humans as cultural beings. Therefore, the primary meaning of cultural da'wah is not much different from da'wah in general. However, the emphasis of cultural da'wah is on human tendencies as beings living within a cultural setting (Amin, 2016).

Cultural Da'wah is a flagship program of the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership for the 2022-2027 period. The goal of this program is to expand Muhammadiyah's power base at the grassroots level through a cultural approach. In principle, Muhammadiyah understands cultural da'wah in terms of the purification and dynamization of Islamic teachings. It is in this dynamization aspect that cultural da'wah plays a significant role in understanding the culture that is developing in a region. A study conducted by Alfarizi explains that Muhammadiyah, through its cultural da'wah, remains purifying, but does not close its eyes to art and culture as a means of da'wah. In addition to appreciating art and culture, Muhammadiyah also optimizes da'wah through social media to reach the digital native generation. This is evidenced by the content presented, which is tailored and relevant to the needs of digital natives. To achieve success, Muhammadiyah's cultural da'wah for digital natives leaves a mission to create young Muhammadiyah da'wah, so that they can realize cultural da'wah through digital natives for other digital natives (Alfarizi, 2024).

Cultural da'wah is not merely understood as a cultural strategy and a social change strategy within a cultural context alone, but also builds a new current in the form of a cultural strategy with Islamic nuances in local and global contexts. Muhammadiyah understands that cultural da'wah should not be misunderstood as Muhammadiyah's attitude to accept traditions as they are, be lenient towards local culture, and change the face of Muhammadiyah as a movement of good deeds and forbidding evil. Cultural da'wah is more intended to respond to the challenges of the times, with all the authority to provide appreciation for developing cultures, as well as accept and create new and better cultures in accordance with the message of Islam (Amin, 2016).

Therefore, the main essence of cultural da'wah is how to shape character and culture into part of behavior. Da'wah enters into the cultural aspects that develop within society. Islam, as a religion, provides a touch of values and an ethical framework elaborated within the developing culture. As Geertz stated, religion is not merely a set of rituals and beliefs. More profoundly, it has also become a cultural system in life (Tajdin, 2022). In short, Geertz, in Pals, understands religion as a framework or blueprint for humans to help them understand the meaning of the world and the realities of life (Pals, 2015).

Method

This study uses ethnographic methods because the approach used is qualitative. Therefore, this study relies more on interpretation of meaning as a framework for explaining the research results. Ethnography focuses on groups that share a common culture. While sometimes these cultural groups may be small (a few teachers, a few social workers), they are generally large, involving many people interacting over time (teachers across a school, a group of community social workers). Therefore, ethnography is a qualitative design in which researchers describe and interpret the patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language shared and learned by groups that share a culture (Creswell, 2007).

Ethnography is a research method for studying groups that share a culture, and the end result is a written version of that research. As a process, ethnography involves in-depth observation of the group, typically through participant observation, in which the researcher immerses himself in the daily lives of group members and observes and interviews group participants. Ethnographers study the meaning of behavior, language, and interactions among members of a group that shares a culture (Creswell, 2007).

The data analysis techniques in ethnographic research can be explained as follows: first, domain analysis, which is focused on identifying broad cultural contexts observed during the research. Second, taxonomic analysis, which aims to analyze more deeply the cultural domains

selected from the domain analysis in the first stage. Third, componential analysis, which aims to further deepen the cultural themes included in the analysis material after the taxonomic analysis. Fourth, cultural theme analysis, which is the final analysis in conducting ethnography in the form of interpretations of the cultural meanings observed in the research (Spradley, 2011).

Results and Discussion

Muhammadiyah and Javanese Culture in Yogyakarta

Yogyakarta is a special city whose existence has been established by the central government through Law Number 13 of 2012. The existence of the palace is not only a symbol of Yogyakarta's special status but also a symbol of Javanese culture centered in the palace. This argument is supported by a historical study conducted by Rahman. In his research, it was explained that Yogyakarta is one of the special regions whose cultural breath has been Islamic since ancient times. This occurred due to the process of cultural acculturation between Javanese, Hindu, and Islamic cultures itself in the Giyanti agreement (1755) (Santosa & Noorwatha, 2025).

The position of Islam in Javanese culture can be approached through cultural theory. This theory positions Islam as a subculture that does not conflict with Javanese culture, its parent culture (Hudayana, 2022). This relationship between culture and subculture is what makes Islam an accepted religion in Yogyakarta. Islam as a subculture has gradually infused the values and culture and become the ethics adopted by the Javanese people of Yogyakarta. Therefore, cultural activities such as art, literature, and other social activities can be seen as a fusion of Javanese culture and Islam(Khoirul Hodayah, 2012).

Another piece of evidence explaining the relationship between Javanese and Islamic culture as cultures and subcultures is seen in the architectural design of the Gede Kauman Mosque. Its existence is not merely limited to serving as a place of worship for Muslims, but also serves as historical evidence that, in an architectural context, it characterizes the fusion of Javanese and Islamic cultural values, manifested in the form of a three-dimensional building, the mosque. This demonstrates that the fusion of Islamic and Javanese cultural values has been established for a long time (Pamungkas et al., 2023). Therefore, the most interesting question is how Muhammadiyah fits into the cultural map of Java, especially in Yogyakarta.

Muhammadiyah's relationship with Javanese culture can actually be seen from the beginning of Muhammadiyah's founding. The existence of Kyai Dahlan as an abdi dalem of the Yogyakarta palace shows that Muhammadiyah was truly born within the walls of Javanese culture (the Yogyakarta palace) which is so strong. Kyai Dahlan was able to interact with Javanese culture and even made Javanese culture a means of da'wah (Rahmawati & Munif, 2023). Another historical fact is that even until Kyai Dahlan's position as Abdi Dalem was not revoked by the sultan. This shows that Kyai Dahlan's existence as a true Javanese has not shifted even though Muhammadiyah was founded on the principles of the Purification Movement (Burhani, 2010).

Muhammadiyah adopts a selective approach to its relationship with culture. It does not reject Javanese culture but rather selectively preserves Javanese culture that does not conflict with Islamic teachings. Furthermore, those cultures that still conflict with Islam are modified and used as a means of preaching. The slametan (prayer) and grebek (enlightenment) events held by Kyai Dahlan are historical evidence of Muhammadiyah's appreciation of Javanese culture, which developed during Kyai Dahlan's era (Burhani, 2010).

Jusmiwarti's study explains that Muhammadiyah's relationship with culture, through its cultural da'wah method, has chosen a selective approach to Javanese traditions. Muhammadiyah maintains elements of Javanese culture that do not conflict with Islamic faith. Muhammadiyah then modifies certain traditions for the benefit of da'wah. This pattern of cultural modification has had a positive influence on Muhammadiyah's development in Java (Yogyakarta) and is packaged in a more structured manner in the social, educational, and cultural arts sectors. The results of her study explain the importance of dialogue regarding the universality of Islam as a religion and local cultural wisdom in order to build an inclusive and progressive society (Bj, 2025).

Muhammadiyah is often perceived as an anti-cultural movement because it carries the theme of preaching against Superstition, Bid`ah, and Churafat (Syaie, 2022). However, since 2000, Muhammadiyah has introduced cultural preaching as a bridge of communication between religion and culture (Aminim et al., 2025). Muhammadiyah accepts outer culture (e.g., customs, cultural expressions) and rejects some of Javanese inner culture (syncretism). This communication pattern was carried out by Kyai Dahlan. The idea of purification in Muhammadiyah's preaching came after the birth of the Tarjih Council and the entry of Padang traditions into Muhammadiyah's religious discourse. Therefore, Muhammadiyah's true character is not an anti-cultural movement but a new movement in Islam that characterizes the movement's pattern of forming new habitus through cultural preaching and charitable efforts. Muhammadiyah continues to try to represent itself as a progressive Islamic movement that is relevant to local culture and ready to welcome global culture (Burhani, 2019).

Therefore, the key word that can be used as a benchmark for why Muhammadiyah was able to develop in Java is the adaptation pattern used by Muhammadiyah, which still uses the Dahlanism pattern. The Dahlanism pattern referred to by the author is that Muhammadiyah does not completely reject Javanese court culture nor does it completely accept it. Instead, it is selective and fills the gaps in Javanese culture with Islamic values. Javanese culture in the form of customs is not rejected but rather integrated into Muhammadiyah's cultural da'wah pattern. Javanese culture containing syncretism is not immediately rejected but continues to be rationalized so that it does not deviate from Islamic faith (Junaidi, 2022). This pattern is what the researcher refers to as the Dahlanism pattern because it applies da'wah without using a fiqh approach like the tarjih council.

From various literary studies on Muhammadiyah's relationship with Javanese culture, the foundation of Muhammadiyah's da'wah is actually the cultural movement. Muhammadiyah's success in interacting with various cultural traditions in Yogyakarta during its early days is authentic proof that Muhammadiyah is close to Javanese culture and is able to decorate Java with universal Islamic values. Therefore, Muhammadiyah's da'wah movement during the era of Kyai Dahlan was a cultural approach, approaching Javanese culture as a medium of da'wah (Songidan et al., 2021). Researchers call this pattern the Dahlanism pattern. Conceptually, the Dahlanism pattern in culture in the early days of Muhammadiyah is as follows:
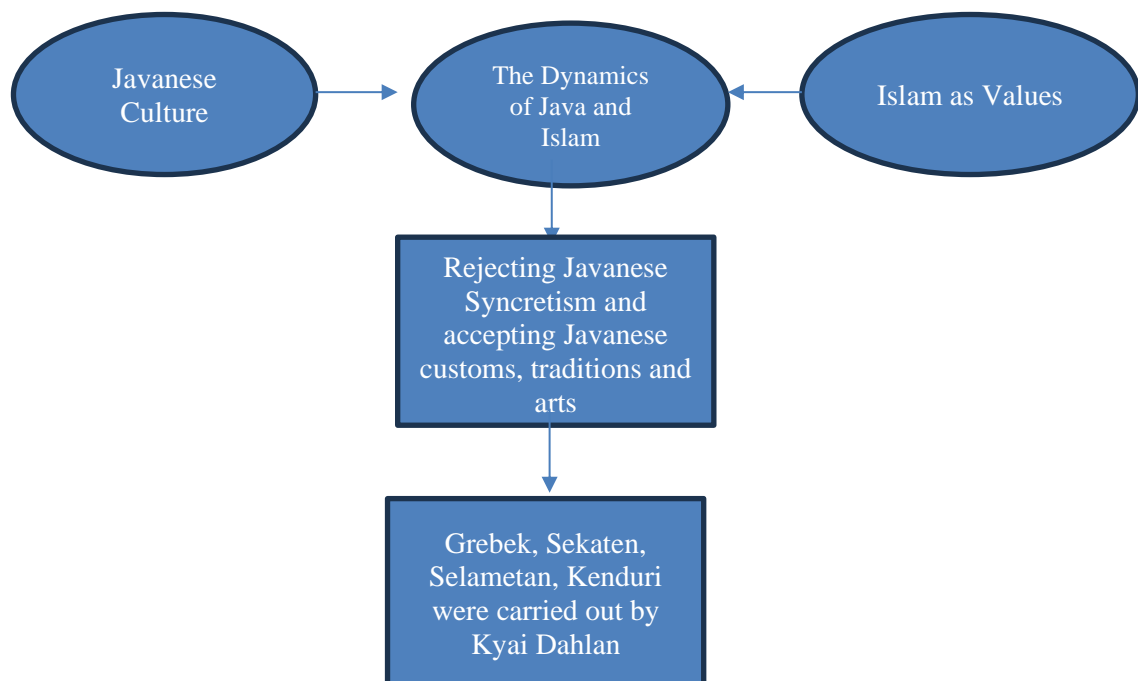
Cultural Preaching at PCM Kasihan Yogyakarta

The pattern above illustrates Dahlan's cultural adaptation in his preaching during the early days of Muhammadiyah's founding. Kyai Dahlan maintained this pattern until it was discontinued following the establishment of the Tarjih Council and the influence of Muhammadiyah scholars from Padang. Afterward, Muhammadiyah's preaching orientation focused more on the Fiqh approach as its main focus. The purification movement, oriented towards anti-TB, began with the presence of the Tarjih Council within Muhammadiyah. Purification was interpreted as a clean sweep of culture and authenticity. The da'wah movement was attributed to the purification of Islamic teachings, as in the era of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Mohamad & Yusoff, 2024). Therefore, Muhammadiyah was portrayed as a puritanical, anti-cultural movement.

Muhammadiyah began to improve its image in the early 2000s, with the birth of the concept of Cultural Da'wah. Simultaneously, this concept was discussed, validated, and established as a pattern for the culture-based Muhammadiyah Movement. The strengthening of the concept of cultural da'wah was channeled through YouTube TVMu during the study of Ramadan 1445 H. where this concept was discussed and reaffirmed, then disseminated by TVMu on its YouTube channel. To reaffirm Muhammadiyah's position in the cultural realm, TVMu plays an important role in disseminating the ideas and concepts of Muhammadiyah's cultural da'wah (Rifai & Rahman, 2025).

While previous research examined cultural da'wah within the context of discourse on YouTube, this study will examine cultural da'wah directly as it is implemented in the Kasihan Yogyakarta PCM. To gain deeper insight into the implementation of cultural da'wah, interviews were conducted directly with the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (PP Muhammadiyah), which also resides in the Kasihan District. The implementation of da'wah in Kasihan has actually long adopted the concept of cultural da'wah. The first interview was conducted with the Tabligh Council, as shown in the image below:

Figure 1
Interview Documents

The interview confirmed that the cultural approach to Muhammadiyah's da'wah in Yogyakarta has been ongoing since the 2000s. This policy was adopted following an official Muhammadiyah decree regarding cultural da'wah. For the people of Yogyakarta, the cultural approach to da'wah is nothing new and should not be disputed. This is because Yogyakarta's climate is steeped in Javanese culture, particularly the palace. The principle of the Yogyakarta community is that they may freely

practice their religion in any way, as long as it does not disrupt the customs and traditions that have long developed in Yogyakarta (Alatas, 2021).

The presence of cultural da'wah was very well received by Muhammadiyah members around Bantul Yogyakarta, because with the concept it is a way and method to further expand Muhammadiyah da'wah. If previously before the existence of cultural da'wah, Muhammadiyah amubalighs were hesitant to participate in kenduri, selametan, grebek which were usually held by the palace. Because culturally the people of Yogyakarta are indeed influenced by Javanese culture in their behavior (Supriyadi et al., 2012). So the presence of cultural da'wah for Muhammadiyah preachers makes it easier to preach to various levels of society to strengthen Muhammadiyah's position at the grassroots.

Each Muhammadiyah branch in the Kasihan PCM regularly holds monthly and weekly religious study groups. The topics discussed are Islam and Muhammadiyah, but are packaged with a cultural approach. Some branches hold religious study groups every Friday night. Others hold them every Friday Legi, Friday Kliwon, and still others hold them every Friday Pahing. The Javanese calendar is used to attract the sympathy of all levels of society (Geertz, 2017). This means that each religious study group is always closely associated with Javanese tradition in its naming.

The selection of which, such as in monthly religious studies, is held on Ahad Legi, Ahad Kliwon, and others according to the branch management. It is a form of appreciation for Javanese culture. In the implementation of cultural da'wah in PCM Kasihan, cultural elements such as religious studies in palace Javanese and language ethics as practiced by the palace are used by Muhammadiyah preachers. So that Muhammadiyah preachers are not only proficient in religious knowledge, mastering the khitah, ideology, and principles of Muhammadiyah alone. The main competency that must not be omitted is passive Javanese language in accordance with the Javanese cultural grammar used in Yogyakarta. The study groups at the Muhammadiyah branch and sub-branch level are confirmed to be mostly in Javanese. The use of Javanese is not only used as a means of communication, but it is also a cultural language that can unite Muhammadiyah and the congregation in Muhammadiyah branches and sub-branches, especially in Kasihan District, Bantul, Yogyakarta (Ansori et al., 2023).

To deepen the implementation of cultural da'wah in the PCM Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta, interviews were conducted with the PCM Kasihan Management as shown in the following picture:

Figure 2
FGD with PCM Kasihan Yogyakarta

The FGD revealed that the implementation of cultural da'wah is a primary agenda for Muhammadiyah preachers in the Asihan area. The PCM Chairperson reminded Muhammadiyah

preachers not to be allergic to the traditions of Yasinan, Salawatan, or Tahlil (recitation of the Koran) that exist in the community. These religious traditions, commonly practiced by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), have become ingrained and become traditions in Yogyakarta. This means that they are reinforced by Javanese culture, so that these Nahdlatul Ulama practices are a reflection of Javanese culture as well (Qorib & Umiarso, 2025). If Muhammadiyah moves away from these traditions, it will be uprooted from its cultural roots.

Therefore, Muhammadiyah needs to change the content of the religious traditions that have developed and become part of Yogyakarta's culture. For example, Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta has adapted its da'wah by holding Yasin recitations at its sub-district religious study groups. Several sub-districts in Kasihan have held Yasin recitations on Friday nights. These Yasin recitations involve reading the Quran's Surah Yasin. The difference lies in the fact that Muhammadiyah doesn't just read the Surah Yasin but also includes a study of its interpretation.

The initial stage is reading the Yasin letter together. After completing the study, the interpretation of the Yasin verses is studied from verse one onward. This becomes a routine activity until the Yasin verse is fully interpreted. If a Muhammadiyah preacher is allergic to the Yasin recitation, he or she will be mentored by the Muhammadiyah Preacher Corps in Yogyakarta. This principle holds that anyone can preach. However, never pit culture against preaching (El Khayat et al., 2022). Therefore, cultural preaching is a highly effective solution from the Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board.

While Muhammadiyah members previously tended to avoid invitations to tahlilan (religious gatherings), the Muhammadiyah model of tahlilan is now being implemented through cultural da'wah (Islamic outreach). However, the intention of tahlilan at the death of a Muhammadiyah member is different: it's not solely to send prayers for the deceased. Instead, it's filled with positive activities, such as recitations to commemorate the death, Quran readings, and other activities, aimed at accompanying the bereaved family. The name of the activity remains tahlilan, but the content is different and is designed to be less burdensome for the bereaved family (Japarudin & Fitria, 2023).

In principle, cultural da'wah in Muhammadiyah Kasihan does not view Javanese culture as an opponent of da'wah. Rather, it uses Javanese culture as a medium to spread progressive Islamic values in society. Most importantly, the community must be able to feel the benefits of Muhammadiyah's presence in the Kasihan sub-district of Bantul, Yogyakarta. The existence of Muhammadiyah da'wah should not be seen as a threat to the sustainability of existing culture in Yogyakarta. Muhammadiyah da'wah must enrich the Islamic cultural heritage in Yogyakarta. Therefore, cultural da'wah is a path that must be taken, understood, and disseminated by all Muhammadiyah preachers in Yogyakarta, especially those in the PCM Kasihan Bantul, Yogyakarta (Wijaya et al., 2023).

From the results of interviews with the management of PCM Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta, it was understood that the true character of Java is a society that strongly upholds its cultural principles. Of course, the existence of the Yogyakarta Palace is not only a symbol of power, but also legitimizes Javanese culture itself for the people of Yogyakarta. If observed carefully from the description above, Muhammadiyah in Kasihan district actually has a strong Javanese cultural connection. However, Muhammadiyah's religious tradition, which tends to be puritanical, slightly disrupts the pattern of Muhammadiyah's da'wah in Yogyakarta. The turning point of cultural da'wah is the bridge of communication between Muhammadiyah's version of religion and Javanese culture itself.

Cultural Da'wah on the Global Stage: "Dahlanism" as a Model for Progressive Islam in the Current of Globalization

Field findings regarding the implementation of "Dahlanism" in PCM Kasihan are not only locally meaningful, but reflect significant resonance in the context of global conversations about the future of Islamic movements in the 21st century. In a world panorama marked by two major currents that are mutually attractive—cultural homogenization through globalization and a reaction in the form of often rigid religious fundamentalism or puritanism—Muhammadiyah's da'wah

strategy in Yogyakarta offers a sophisticated third path. This path is not merely passive adaptation, but rather an active and reflective glocalization project, in which the universality of Islamic values is not upheld by destroying cultural particularities, but rather through creative and transformative engagement with them (Featherstone et al., 1995). The global phenomenon of Islamic movements after the Iranian Revolution is often polarized between the model of political Islam that is ambitious to seize the state and the model of cultural Islam that focuses on civil society. Muhammadiyah, with its "Dahlanism," clearly falls into the second category, but with an important nuance: it does not simply accept culture as a fact to be tolerated, but rather actively reshapes it from within with a rational and progressive Islamic ethos. In this regard, Muhammadiyah moves beyond the conventional paradigm that views the relationship between religion and culture only in terms of conflict or simple accommodation, toward a paradigm of "engagement and transformation" (Burhani, 2019).

Contextualizing these findings within global discourse is crucial, particularly to address the frequently discussed challenge of the "clash of civilizations." The narrative of the clash of civilizations, as proposed by Huntington (1996), often simplifies Islam as a monolithic bloc that is at odds with modernity and local, non-Arab cultures (Huntington, 1996). Muhammadiyah's cultural da'wah practices in Kasihan actually refute this thesis. Here, Islam does not clash with Javanese culture, but rather engages in productive dialogue with it, producing a new synthesis that does not lose the original identity of both. The Great Kauman Mosque as a physical symbol and the "yasinan tafsiri" as a social practice are proof that this "clash" can be transformed into an "alchemy of cultures," a blend that gives birth to new, more valuable elements (Khoirul Hodayah, 2012). This is an important contribution to the global Islamic world, which is often caught in a dichotomy between maintaining the "purity" of its teachings by isolating itself, or accepting modernity and globalization so raw that it loses its spiritual spirit. "Dahlanism" offers a healthy religious ecology, where strong roots (tawhid) allow the tree (local culture) to grow and bear fruit (universal benefit), without being uprooted from the soil.

Furthermore, findings on Muhammadiyah's use of social media and approach to the digital native generation must be read within the lens of the global challenge of "digital religion" (Alfarizi, 2024). The digital space has created a transnational virtual ummah, where the most puritanical and literal religious discourses can spread rapidly, often eroding traditional religious authority and local wisdom (Campbell, 2012). Cultural da'wah that relies solely on traditional media (physical religious studies, local languages) risks losing relevance to a generation living in the digital world. Herein lies Muhammadiyah's strategic expertise, as observed in Kasihan and also in TvMu broadcasts. They do not reject technology, but rather use it as an amplifier for already developed cultural messages. The use of YouTube to discuss cultural da'wah is an effort to "globalize the local"—making Yogyakarta's dialogical model an example that Muslim communities in other parts of the world can see and learn from. This is a form of creative resistance to the homogenization of digital culture; Instead of just consuming homogenous global religious content, Muhammadiyah tries to produce content that is rooted in locality but delivered using global language (digital technology).

Another global implication lies in the potential of "Dahlanism" as an alternative framework for deradicalizing and strengthening moderate Islam. Many Western-funded global deradicalization programs tend to be securitized and overly emphasize the "moderate Islam versus radical Islam" narrative, which alienates many groups (Schmeding, 2023). Muhammadiyah's approach, as seen in Kasihan, offers something more organic and sustainable: building community resilience through the strengthening of a substantively Islamized culture. When communities feel that their cultural identity is respected and enriched by inclusive and progressive Islamic values, the appeal of radical narratives that offer a complete break with "infidel" or "jahiliyah" culture will be greatly diminished. The "Municipal Corps" program, which trains "culture-allergic" preachers to better understand cultural approaches, is a highly sophisticated form of internal deradicalization, as it transforms mindsets within the movement itself.

However, implementing the "Dahlanism" model in a global context is not without challenges. Cultural transplantation is a highly complex undertaking. What works in Yogyakarta,

where Islam has been acculturated for centuries, may not be immediately applicable to minority Muslim communities in Europe or to communities with very different cultural traditions, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa. The selective-accommodative-transformative principle requires a deep anthropological understanding of each local culture, something that not every Islamic movement can possess. Furthermore, there is a tension between particularism and universalism within Islam itself. Transnational Salafi-Wahhabi groups, with substantial financial and media resources, continue to promote an Arab-style universalism that often devalues local cultural expressions (Roy, 2004). "Dahlanism" must compete in this "battle of narratives" at the global level. Muhammadiyah's success at the local level needs to be supported by active cultural and religious diplomacy to showcase the rich, inclusive, and progressive model of Nusantara Islam to the international community.

Another challenge comes from the increasingly digitally connected younger generation of global Muslims who often experience "cultural hybridity." They may no longer have strong emotional ties to traditional local cultures like older generations. For them, relevant "culture" may be global pop culture, online games, or virtual communities. Therefore, the concept of "culture" in cultural da'wah needs to be expanded beyond traditional customs, to include contemporary "digital culture" and "youth culture." This is what Muhammadiyah has begun to implement through its social media content, but the scale still needs to be enlarged and innovation increased.

In conclusion, the research at PCM Kasihan is not merely an ethnographic account of da'wah activities in a sub-district in Yogyakarta. It is a microcosm of a larger civilizational project. The "Dahlanism" practiced there is living proof that Islam can be a force that advances civilization (lihat PP Muhammadiyah, 2023) without having to confront local culture or global modernity. It offers a blueprint for "Islamic civility"—a civilized society built on a strong foundation of Islamic spirituality, but expressed through humanistic local language, art, and traditions. In a global context fraught with identity tensions, this model deserves to be introduced as part of the solution. However, to become a global model, systematic efforts are needed to document, theorize, and disseminate these best practices, not only in Indonesian but also in international languages, as well as to build networks with moderate and progressive Islamic movements around the world that share a similar vision. In this way, the pulse of cultural da'wah from Kasihan, Bantul, can resonate as a rhythm that contributes to the harmony of Islam and culture on the world stage.

To understand the position of cultural da'wah within the dynamics of contemporary Islam and global discourse, a systematic mapping of its conceptual aspects, practices, and strategic implications is necessary. The following table summarizes the core points of cultural da'wah as practiced in the local context (PCM Kasihan) while also positioning it within the global conversation on religiosity, Islamic moderation, and social transformation. This presentation aims to demonstrate how cultural da'wah functions not only as a local strategy but also as a conceptual model relevant at the global level.

Table 1 nti Point: Cultural Preaching on the Global Stage

Key Aspects	Key Points & Mechanisms	Implications and Explanations
1. Position in Global Discourse	Cultural da'wah is positioned as a third way between global cultural homogenization and rigid religious fundamentalism. This approach represents a model of active glocalization, in which the universality of Islam engages in creative dialogue with the particularities of local cultures.	Challenging the "clash of civilizations" narrative, practices in Kasihan demonstrate that Islam can integrate productively with local cultures without losing its theological identity.
2. Model of Islamic Movement	Operating within the framework of cultural Islam, it focuses on strengthening civil society, not political	Offering an alternative to the political or confrontational model of Islamic movements

	Islam. This approach is active through the paradigm of "engagement and transformation," reshaping culture from within.	by emphasizing the formation of social habitus and long-term cultural transformation.
3. Contribution to Global Diversity Ecology	Producing a healthy religious ecology, where a solid foundation of monotheism allows local cultural expressions to develop creatively and beneficially. Examples include the Great Kauman Mosque and the practice of "yasinan tafsiri" (recitation of the Quran) as a form of "alchemy of cultures."	Responding to the global dichotomy between puritan isolation and secular assimilation by offering a synthesis that maintains both spirituality and contextual relevance.
4. Response to Digital Challenges	Adopting a strategy of "globalizing the local" by utilizing digital media (YouTube, TvMu) as a reinforcement of cultural preaching messages.	It is a form of creative resistance to the homogenization of global religious content through the production of locally based messages with global media.
5. Relevance for Deradicalization and Moderation of Islam	Offering an organic approach through strengthening community resilience. Inclusivity is built by enriching, rather than severing, local cultural identities. Fostering preachers with "cultural allergies" is understood as a form of internal deradicalization.	Becoming an alternative to the securitization-based deradicalization approach by positioning culture as a social resource to counter radicalism.
6. Global Implementation Challenges	(a) The complexity of cultural transplantation, because success in Yogyakarta is difficult to replicate mechanically; (b) competition of global narratives with Arab-Salafi universalism; (c) shifts in youth culture marked by cultural hybridity.	Requires contextual anthropological understanding and adaptive cultural diplomacy strategies in each area of application.
7. Strategic Opportunities and Recommendations	(a) Theorization and dissemination of "Dahlanism" as a global analytical model; (b) network diplomacy with international moderate Islamic movements; (c) digital da'wah innovation targeting youth culture and digital culture.	Muhammadiyah's institutional commitment is needed to export not dogma, but the methodology and philosophy of cultural da'wah.
8. Main Conclusion (Big Picture)	The practice of cultural da'wah at PCM Kasihan is a microcosm of the project of progressive Islamic civilization. "Dahlanism" serves as a blueprint for Islamic civility that combines Islamic spirituality and local cultural humanism.	Making a concrete contribution to global peace and coexistence by demonstrating that Islam and local cultures can mutually enrich and advance civilization.

This table confirms that cultural da'wah is not merely a local, contextual strategy, but rather a paradigm with global relevance. With a solid foundation of monotheism and openness to cultural expression, cultural da'wah offers a progressive model of Islam capable of addressing the challenges of radicalism, cultural homogenization, and digital disruption (Niemi et al., 2023). Therefore, theoretical and institutional strengthening of this approach is a crucial prerequisite for cultural da'wah to contribute more broadly to the global Islamic conversation.

Conclusion

This ethnographic research firmly answers its central question: how Muhammadiyah at the grassroots level—in this case PCM Kasihan, Yogyakarta—implements cultural da'wah and positions itself within the complex Javanese cultural landscape. The main findings dismantle the simplistic dichotomy between "puritanism" and "traditionalism." Muhammadiyah is not a foreign force that rejects culture, but rather an intelligent and adaptive cultural actor, successfully implementing the strategy inherited from its founder, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. This strategy, which we call "Dahlanism," operates through three main mechanisms in da'wah practices in Kasihan: first, symbolic accommodation to the outer culture (such as the use of the Javanese Krama calendar and language in scheduling and conducting religious studies); second, the transformation of meaning in the inner culture (such as filling the "yasinan" ritual with tafsir studies and transforming "tahlilan" into an educative forum for friendship and death commemoration); and third, orientation towards social welfare, where Muhammadiyah's presence is designed to be a partner that enriches, not a threat that destroys, local cultural treasures.

The theoretical implications of this research are significant. First, it strengthens and operationalizes the concept of "Dahlanism" as an analytical model for the study of religion and culture, particularly in understanding modern Islamic movements confronting locality. This model bridges Geertz's symbol system theory and Malinowski's functionalism by showing how religious agents actively negotiate, choose, and reconstruct the meaning of a tradition, rather than simply accepting or rejecting it. Second, this research shifts the perception that cultural purification and accommodation are two opposing poles. In Kasihan, the two actually synergize in a contextual purification, where the purification of faith is carried out by transforming cultural practices, rather than denying them.

The practical implications of these findings are highly relevant for Muhammadiyah's organizational management and da'wah. The pattern in the Kasihan PCM can serve as a benchmarking model and training module for Muhammadiyah branches in other regions with a strong cultural base. Preachers need to be equipped not only with religious competencies (fiqh, tauhid), but also cultural competencies—a deep understanding of local cultural philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics—as well as transformative communication skills. Institutional policies also need to encourage the documentation and exchange of best practices in cultural da'wah between regions.

However, this study has limitations. Its limited scope to a single branch with a very strong Yogyakartan character makes generalization difficult. Comparative studies with branches in other cultural areas (such as Sundanese, Minang, or Bugis) are essential to test the resilience and variation of the "Dahlanism" model. Furthermore, this study captures more of the insider perspective of Muhammadiyah. The response and acceptance of non-Muhammadiyah communities to ritual transformations such as "*yasinan tafsiri*" have not been explored in depth, even though this is an important measure of the success of the accommodation strategy.

Therefore, suggestions for further research are: (1) Conducting comparative-interdisciplinary research to map the variants of Muhammadiyah's cultural da'wah strategies in various cultural regions in Indonesia; (2) Reception studies that focus on the perceptions of non-Muhammadiyah communities (especially Nahdlatul Ulama) and the younger generation towards the transformation of traditions carried out by Muhammadiyah; and (3) Longitudinal research to observe the dynamics and consistency of the application of cultural da'wah in responding to new challenges such as digital globalization and the onslaught of popular culture. Thus, the creative dialectic between progressive Islam and local wisdom can continue to be mapped and developed.

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