

The Role of Mosque and *Khutba* in Socio-Economic Development of Indonesia: Lessons from *Kauman* Mosque in Central Java

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Abstract

Throughout various phases and epochs of Islamic history, the mosque's functions have fluctuated and adapted to the political, economic and social realities of the time. To understand the diverse roles of the mosque today in traditionally Islamic and non-Islamic societies, it is necessary to understand how mosque functions evolved, changed and were sometimes reincorporated after long periods of dormancy. This study examines the increasingly significant role of the mosque, especially through their influential Friday prayer sermons (*khutba*), for empowering socio-economic dimensions in the moderate Indonesian Muslim society. Friday sermons which had been commonly dominated by religious themes have been progressively reformed by inserting more relevant and essential messages for socio-economic empowerment. A very historic *Kauman* mosque in Semarang, Central Java, has been demonstrating as a dynamic institution capable of responding to contemporary social needs. Islamic scholars and practitioners from different fields have been encouraged to deliver Friday sermons to enlighten the Friday congregation on how to deal with contemporary circumstances. Apparently, the *Kauman* mosque's strategy is to try to bridge the gap between religiously oriented and contextualized approaches in propagating Islam. However, the dynamic social environment surrounding the mosque will determine if mosques will be properly operated for religious, political, or socio-economic functions. This study suggests to maintain both social and cultural bases surrounding the mosque for a sustainable reform effort.

Keywords: Mosque, *khutba*, *imam*, congregation, socio-economic developments.

Introduction

Despite the significant role of mosques around the world in the development of Islamic civilization, there has been limited studies focusing on the mosque's impact on socio-economic context. After the September 11 tragedy in the U.S, global media has been more inclined to pay greater attention to Islam and mosques, particularly from political and security dimensions. Mosques in many Muslim majority countries have been commonly depicted as the place of terrorism breeding. Gupta and Mundra (2005: 573-598) for instance, describe the use of the mosques by the radical Muslim organizations such as the Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon as the place to produce fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. It is not only in the Middle Eastern countries where most sectarian conflicts occurred. Mosques in the Western countries have also been frequently accused as the tangible manifestation of Islam which often clandestinely teach hatred and intolerance endangering the principles of Western multicultural societies (Dunn, 2001: 291-308). That potentially generates misleading understandings among societies as mosque is basically not a static institution and is actually highly influenced by the dynamic nature and social environment surrounding this religious institution.

In responding to the overly concerned media about the role of the mosque, the discussion needs to be shifted to other dimensions such as socio-economic context. The ongoing efforts to

link between mosques and terrorism discourse will tend to limit other perspectives in which mosques have had significantly positive impacts on multicultural societies such as Indonesia. In fact, it is undeniable that mosques have become centers of civilization where libraries, *madrassa* (Islamic schools), and other business agencies are located in. In the effort to provide other perspectives on the role of mosques, especially in socio-economic context, this article will examine *khutba* (sermons delivered on Friday prayers) as a strategic media to generate and disseminate the ideas of socio-economic transformation. As explained by Mellor and Rinnawi (2016), the Friday prayer and its sermon can play a crucial role in social change as both have two parallel functions either for the routine Muslim gathering event and also the chance to influence, convince, and also empower congregates for social and economic transformations.

This one-year content analysis study on *Khutba* took place in *Masjid Kauman*, the oldest mosque in Semarang, Central Java. The mosque, which was built at the end of 15th century has become one of the cultural heritages in the province as it has strong historical link with the establishment of Semarang as the capital city of Central Java (Yusuf, 2002). Many historical literature demonstrated the *Kauman* mosque as not only a religious center, but also a center of economy and business given its location in the next to the biggest traditional market in Semarang. The mosque which was built by the first regent of Semarang, Sunan Pandan Arang, was also utilized for governmental functions in which the regent and the people had gathered to discuss social and political dynamics since 1575. After the establishment of the nation state, especially under the authoritarian Soeharto administration where violence, intimidation and repression became common ways to discipline Muslims' criticism, the mosque was largely relegated to religious functions only.

After the reform era where political literacy and commitment of religious freedom adequately

developed within the newly democratized Indonesian society, there have been questions and criticisms regarding the role of the mosque in socio-economic dimensions. Therefore, this study will investigate the nature of the *Kauman* mosque in supporting socio-economic development through its religious activities. Against these backdrops, this article will answer several main questions; to what extent can the mosque play its strategic roles in socio-economic transformation through its religious activities, particularly through its Friday prayer sermons? What strategies have been taken by the mosque's stakeholders to achieve their goals in this context? In order to answer the questions, this study examines all of the Friday prayer's sermons in 2015. The *khutba* or sermons during 2015 which lasted approximately 20 minutes were recorded and analyzed by using content analysis procedures. The findings of this study will not only become significant lessons for all stakeholders to optimize the role of mosque for socio-economic development, but also for neutralizing the current dominance of global media coverage on the role of mosque in overwhelmingly negative points of views.

Mosque as a dynamic religious institution

Scholars have long discussed the role of religious institutions in the social life such as for political mobilization of congregates (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001) or for the basis of civil society. In Islamic studies, studies capturing the dynamics of mosque have highlighted the role of mosque from historical perspectives to the current dynamics of mosque. In Islam, mosque is a prophetic and the most important artifact of Islamic civilization. The word of '*masjid*' or mosque which literally means as a submission was mentioned 28 times in Quran. Therefore, mosque is often referred as a place to conduct any activities which are intended to follow the guidance of God.

Historically, the first mosque was built by Prophet Muhammad when he migrated from Mecca to Medina. He built the first mosque which is well

known as Quba mosque not only for religious purposes but also for political, security and social-economic services. Miftahi (1996) has clearly described how strategic and significant the role of the earliest mosque was during the Prophet Muhammad's time, where the mosque had successfully been used as a community center as the basic foundation of the currently developed Islamic civilization. In the mosque, Muhammad conducted various activities in the mosque such as curing sick people, a place for consultation and governmental meetings. Armstrong (2007: 102) and Peters (1994: 194) also described well how the earliest mosque was also used for educational, military and judicial needs as the earliest Muslim converts did not have common space yet to run their public activities. Therefore, the mosque in the prophetic tradition was functioned as a place to create dynamic and progressive cultures which positioned a mosque as socio-economic center in addition to religious center (Razia, 2006).

Another interesting study is about the change of mosque architecture associated with political dynamics. Research conducted by Heba Mostafa (2016) under the title, "The Early Mosque Revisited: Introduction of the *Minbar* and *Maqsura*" gives attention to the mosque's *qibla* layout. As the mosque evolved in response to the authority contested by the early rulers of Islam, this dependence of authority on the masses in the mosque led to a series of changes taking place in the *qibla* of the mosque. By reviewing the main mosques of Kufa, Basra, Damascus, Wasit, and Madina between 630 and 715 Hijri, and reviewing the development of their *qibla* space, Mostafa (2016) discovers three architectural interpretation changes to the *qibla* space. First, the development of the pulpit as a platform for *khutba*, secondly, the cover screen (*maqsura*) in front of the *qibla* for the caliph, and third, the provision of direct access to *dar al-imara* through the *qibla* wall. This study also confirms that the seizure of religious and political authority in early Islam turned out to have a formal influence on the architectural interpretation of the mosque.

In Malaysia, Mohd Al'ikhsan Ghazali, et.al. (2016) studied the other aspect of the role of mosques. In the study on *Mosques a Platform to Address the Issue of the Anti-Hadith Ideology*, Ghazali, et.al. (2016) concluded that mosques played the important role in addressing uncommon ideology such as the anti-hadith ideology through the mosque lectures. The study showed that such spiritual teaching can be one of the good ways in helping Muslims to avoid what they regarded as the dangerous ideologies such as anti-hadith ideology. This research also proved that Muslims who frequented the mosques were safe from the influence of the anti-hadith movement in Malaysia.

In Indonesia, there have been some literature discussing the role of mosques. Gazalba (1994) undertook a historical investigation of Indonesian mosques which functioned not only as religious institutions but also served as a place for mass mobilization to achieve Indonesian's independence in 1945. Gazalba (1994) also underlined the trend of mosque establishment in Minangkabau and other Muslim communities across the archipelago which contained various motives related to social, economics, politics, and arts. He outlined the importance of the mosque for kings or local leaders who wanted to integrate mosque with their kingdoms especially in the pre-independence era. It is presumably not only caused by their religious conceptions on the integration of state (*daulat*) and religion (*ad-din*), but also for their leadership's political legitimacy. Therefore, some mosques were built close or next to kingdoms such as *Kauman* mosque in Yogyakarta, Surakarta and also Semarang.

Masjid Kauman or *Kauman* mosque in Semarang is the largest and oldest mosque in Semarang city. It has strong historical value since it is closely related to the development of Semarang city. In the book „*Selayang Pandang Masjid Besar Semarang*“ (Overview of the Semarang Great Mosque), the *Kauman* mosque was built by Sunan Pandan Arang, Maulana Ibn Abdul Salam, an Arabian religious scholar.

Pandan Arang was assigned by Sunan Kalijaga (one of the nine famous guardians of Islam in Java) to spread the religion of Islam in the west of the Demak Sultanate, which was Pulau Tirang, subsequently called Semarang. Because of his great influence in society, Sunan Pandan Arang was appointed as the first regent of Semarang. Sunan Pandan Arang is called Adipati Pandan Arang I. He made the mosque not only for a place of worship and religion, but also for governmental activities in 1575 (Badan Kesejahteraan Masjid, 1998: 4). This report reveals the historical fact that *Masjid Kauman* is at the center of two important community activities; both religious activities and government activities which is similar to the mosque's function in the Prophet Mohammed era in Medina.

The mosque's functions have been gradually influenced by the dynamics of socio-economic and political life. Muslims in Indonesia are characteristically heterogeneous with multiple traditions unlike one-single colored of Islamic tradition. At least, there are two major Islamic organizations, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah which have significantly shaped Indonesian politics, religious, and socio-economic life along with the other minor Muslims organizations. Both Muslim organizations have organized themselves in building thousand institutions including mosques, health services, business centers, schools, universities, and other social services. While many religious-based socio-economic institutions have been separately established, the role of mosques in Indonesia is inclined to be gradually shifted to focusing on religious functions only.

However, the role of mosques tends to be institutionalized based on conditions surrounding it. In this secularized nature of mosque's functions, Muslim stakeholders consistently attempt to optimize the role of mosque by using its religious activities to disseminate ideas and spirits of change in their congregates' daily life. In order to understand these efforts, it

is essential to capture the dynamic nature of mosque which includes the relationship between preachers (*imam*) and their congregants that are routinely met in the religious gathering, especially through the Friday prayer and its sermon. In this study, the researcher examined ways in which the Friday sermons run especially in terms of themes and selection of preachers in *Kauman* mosque as one of the oldest mosques in Central Java. In examining these aspects, the researcher looked from multiple dimensions of preachers as they hold the strategic and pivotal role in the Friday sermon. Preachers or Imam which are similar to the priest in Christianity must have strong Islamic knowledge and virtue of Muslims. The chosen topics and their ways to deliver their sermons will determine the level of impacts of their religious messages.

Research Method

This study collected Friday sermons or *Khutba* during 2015 in one of the oldest mosques in Semarang, Central Java. The study was started from the 1st of January to the 31st of December 2015 which was able to collect 52 recordings of Friday's sermon at the mosque. The researcher developed a content analysis method adopting the approach from Klaus (2004) to identify and unpack the range of *Khutba* themes, the preachers' background, and reflect them with contemporary social-economic settings happening during the period. In order to clarify some potential bias information and misinterpretation gathered from the content analysis approach, this study conducted an in-depth interview with *Takmir* (mosque committee) specially to underlying themes, issues and the ways in which the *Takmir* had influenced the selection of themes in the Friday sermons.

Friday Sermon as Instrument of Social-Economic Transformation

The diverse characteristics of Friday sermon in the Mosque can actually be seen from the varied background of the preachers in terms

of their professions, knowledge, and roles in society. The background of the preachers determines how the character of Islam was created. In some regions, the selection of the preacher is important because the *khutba* delivered will represent the characteristics of the mosque. A study on *khutba* in the United States indicates that *khutba* do not only present religious materials but also social messages for daily-life of society (Hashem, 2010). The similar fact was found in France where the preachers conveyed materials in their *khutba* to show the flexible characteristics of Islam which can be applied in the Western context. The preachers avoided ideological materials and picked materials related to Islamic roles in the broader Western society (Reeber, 1993).

The characteristic of *khutba* above is strongly influenced by the factor of Muslim community living around the mosque. It builds awareness among the preachers to reinterpret Islamic doctrines which eventually result in moderation and progressiveness. The preachers realize that pluralism and peaceful atmosphere are fundamental needs in order to achieve prosperity and well-being. It could be difficult and challenging if the preachers are homogenized by political interests where the *khutba* becomes the voices of the power holders to aggregate their political-economic or ideological interests. In this context, the nature of state and society becomes determinant factor in shaping the characteristics of the *khutba*. For instance, in Malaysia, Singapore or Brunei Darussalam where the nature of democracy remained seriously questioned, the topics of *khutba* have been over viewed by the governments in order to maintain the political regime's values and stability. Since 1980s, *Khutba* in the countries has always conveyed the state interpretations on Islamic doctrines for supporting the governmental policies (Samuri & Hopkins, 2017). This situation is clearly different from what happens in Indonesia especially after the authoritarian regime toppled in 1998. The expression of religious freedom has been widespread either through liberal

or conservative Islamic interpretations which sometimes cause friction, clash and instability within the society.

In Muslim life, Friday prayer has a central function. It is not only an event to perform religious rituals, but also has a strategic social function. Friday prayers become a forum for community harmony, because it is implemented by almost all members of the community. There is a cultural value that all members of society must obey. In Koentjaraningrat's definition (Koentjaraningrat, 1994: 25), the cultural value consists of a conception that lives in the minds of most citizens about what they consider most necessary in life. This system serves as the ultimate guide to the order of human life. So any member of society who ignores or leaves the Friday prayer will get social sanction. The lightest sanction is gossip as an unorthodox and disobedience to religion (Khadik, 2002). In addition, Friday prayers have also become an important barometer of Moslem cohesiveness. Besides a gathering event, the Friday prayer provides weekly sermon which is perceived as the most effective way to influence and moderate Muslims' understanding.

At the basic level, this study found that *khutba* in *Kauman* mosque represents a dynamic religious interpretation in Islam. However, in conjunction with the increasing political literacy among Muslims and the mosque committee members (*takmir*), *khutba* in this mosque has successfully been used for conflict resolution instrument, rather than conflict producer within Muslims and the broader society. This approach has been done by avoiding covering 'controversial' Islamic interpretations and sensitive political issues. Conversely, the mosque committee inclined to enrich the *khutba*'s materials by generating more productive and useful information.

In 2015, there were 51 preachers delivering *khutba* from January, 2 2015 to December, 25 2015. Almost every Friday sermon was attended by a different preacher. In order to enrich the congregants' paradigm, the preachers

invited in the mosque were not only originated from the religious backgrounds but also from social organizations, governments, and higher educational backgrounds. In terms of educational background, some preachers did not pursue formal education but they graduated from informal religious education called *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). On the other hand, other preachers had advanced formal education such as doctorate degree from local and international universities. Therefore, even though some preachers had limited religious understanding, they can contextualize Islamic doctrine based on their expertise in medicine, psychology, management, legal and others.

In classifying the 51 *khutbas* in 2015, this study incorporated a conception of social and ritual piety. The social piety refers to thematic approaches of humanistic activities while ritual piety is used to describe the mandatory ritual activities mentioned in the religious decree. Social piety can also be discussed in terms of human to human relations and ritual piety should be understood as human to Allah (god) relations. These conceptualizations are not intended to contrast between two themes due to complex dimensions between each theme. The ritual piety, for instance, which is centred on the ritual activities such as five daily prayers and Ramadan fasting entails social dimensions as well. To avoid confusion during the analysis, the researcher set mixed categories for mixed social and ritual piety in the *khutba*'s texts.

Table: Sermon Orientations

No	Sermon Orientations	Total	Percentage
1	Ritual piety	17	33
2	Social piety	4	8
3	Balanced between social and ritual piety	30	59
	Total	51	100

As it can be seen from Table 1, mixed social and ritual piety themes dominated the themes of Friday sermon in *Masjid Kauman*. 30 *khutbas* tended to focus on the balanced view between social and ritual piety. In this context, preachers might deliver their speech about the impact of Ramadan fasting for social developments. Of 51 *khutbas* delivered during 2015, 17 *khutbas* (33%) focused on the ritual piety themes which emphasized on the importance of five foundational rituals in Islam such as praying, fasting, and pilgrimage. Interestingly, only four *khutbas* discussed exclusively about social piety; the themes under this category consisted of topics such as the importance of keeping a body health and participating in general elections. The following paragraphs discuss emerging topics as a result of content analysis procedures.

Despite the domination of religious topics in the *Khutba*, some preachers could be seen as keen on responding the actual issues in society. One of the most important issues in the beginning of 2015 was a conflict between Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and National Police Headquarter in responding to the nomination of Budi Gunawan as a candidate of Indonesian national police. Due to Budi Gunawan's track record on his alleged involvement in some corruption scandals, KPK objected his nomination for Indonesian national police chief. As the case was influenced by political motives, people's attention was paid to the development of this case followed by some mass demonstrations in many places. In responding to the case, there were two Friday sermons calling on the promotion of justice in society regardless of the position and political backgrounds. On 30 January 2015, Hamdani Muin, followed by Abdul Karim Sa'lawy on 20 February 2015, delivered a *khutba* related to the case of Budi Gunawan. Both of these preachers unpacked the issue from the Islamic justice perspective. Hamdani Muin specifically commented on the case in terms of the importance of establishing justice and truth

in society as can be seen from the following excerpt:

In last few weeks, we are trapped on the heated debate between Indonesian national police and corruption eradication commission. This case reminds us about the importance of justice in our country. In Islamic tradition, justice becomes a means of establishing fairness among all citizens, thus, a court should be used in a way of seeking equal justices. We should also note that the justice should be upheld for all human being, not limited to Muslims. Al Qur'an verse al-Maidah: 8 mentions that we should be fair for all people, even the one we hated and for non-Muslims (42 years-old preacher).

In addition, some preachers in *Kauman* mosque delivered *khutba* in responding to the upcoming regional local election in Semarang held on December 9, 2015 to choose new regent and vice regent of Semarang. As the regional election might instigate horizontal conflicts among voters, one of the preachers elaborated a topic about the importance of keeping harmony during on election season, he explained that:

In the upcoming months, we will have general election. We should be mindful that we need to promote in any activities related to election. Although some support their own candidates, we need to be rational and not being provocative in facing the election (45 years-old preacher).

Apart from discussing current issues, the most prominent topic presented by preachers was related to the character building. This seemed to relate with one of the purposes of *khutba* as the instrument of character building. As a reflection of Islamic new year on January 9, 2015 which was also close to New Year celebration on the 1st of January, one of the preachers emphasized the audience to reflect on the past activities and ponder on the future plans by infusing religious spirituality in every goal in order to achieve good character. Furthermore, the preacher went on to criticize Muslims who tended to aim on quantity but neglect the quality

of activities as can be seen from the increasing cases of corruption, collusion, and nepotism while many of the actors looked religious. The preacher insisted to the audience to revisit their own purpose of life and aligned them with the true message of Islam. The preacher also confidently appointed some big names related to big corruption cases to highlight the phenomena of moral crisis happening in society while shouting for a wake-up call for Muslims to take a part in combating corruption. The preacher emphasized the value of *Amana* for all Muslims currently holding mandate of public office. He subsequently unpacked the issue by using an example of Prophet Muhammad who was successfully leading his community and prioritized society's over his own narrow interests.

Another attractive theme within the *khutba* was related to health. This theme was very unusually delivered in the Friday sermon. Through this investigation, the background of the preachers tends to shape the topic of *khutba*. As one of the hospital directors in Central Java, the preacher conveyed a topic on heart health on 17 April 2015. He correlated the importance of keeping heart health with Islamic perspective as can be seen from the following excerpt:

In this Khutba, please allow me to convey a khutba related to the advice from our Prophet Muhammad on the importance of keeping our heart healthy. It is very important, as we have witnessed an increasing number of people with heart attack. We often know of our neighbors or friends who suddenly died when they watched TV, did exercise and daily activities, or even when they slept. In that situation, most of them were mostly diagnosed as having coronary heart disease. Fourteen centuries ago, Prophet Muhammad reminded us on the hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim that our heart is the most important part of our body which can make other parts of our body in good condition (40 years-old preacher).

In addition to the religious arguments, the preacher was based his opinion on medical science. He then explained that hearth functioned as a pump tool for human body. This part of our body which its weight around 2.5 to 4 ounces, had fundamental function for human body. In one minute, our hearth pumps more than 4.5 litre bloods. Before closing his *khutba*, the preacher conveys important tips for his pilgrims related to keeping health for hearth consisting of feeling a positive thinking, avoid smoking, and having a good eating habit.

What has been demonstrated by the *Kauman* mosque is distinctive and extra-ordinary in the way where many *khutbas* in other mosques are dominated by expression of hatred for others by misusing and hijacking Islamic doctrines. Moreover, some preachers in the *Kauman* mosque intentionally presented some topics of peace building, conflict resolution and the significance of Islamic solidarity in order to neutralize potential frictions, tensions and conflicts within Muslim communities or the broader Indonesian society. On the 2nd of October 2015, for example, the preacher explained about the history of Prophet Ibrahim and his role to build peace. In one occasion, Prophet Ibrahim prayed that one day Mecca will be a prosperous city which is not only exclusively for Muslims but also for non-Muslims as mentioned in al-Baqarah verse 126. The Prophet emphasized the importance of peaceful spirit on everyday life and surrender to God. The preacher then added his point as follows:

As one of the biggest religions in Indonesia, it is our time to spread peaceful spirit among societies as it has been taught by our Prophet Muhammad. We can do it by balancing our relations to God and to human beings. When dealing with human relations, we should prioritize fairness rather than putting religious interests in the first hand. What had happened in our society such as religious conflicts tend to carry on destructive effects for both our religion and society. Therefore, there is an adagio stating that al-Islam mahjubun bil Muslimin or the religion of Islam tends to be covered by its

followers due to their bad influences. The history of Islam has successfully reformed the darkness time of human civilization to the prosperous Islamic spirit which provided same opportunity to all mankind. Therefore, we need to rejuvenate these spirits in this modern world (39 years-old preacher).

What has been demonstrated in the *Kauman* mosque has clearly shown the spirit of social transformation by contextualising Islamic values as essential messages in the Friday sermons. Not only related to local or national issues, preachers also paid big attentions to some global discourses such as related to Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and crisis in Palestine. Most of the themes were aimed to call the Muslim solidarity to pray and contribute some funds to trustful organizations. Previous global issue was also discussed in the *khutba* on the blasphemy of Prophet Muhammad in Charlie Hebdo journal. The preacher mentioned about the importance of not being over reactive with this global issue as it could create riots in society. However, the preacher recommended to the congregation to respond to such case in a good manner such as signing petition and communicating an objection to the government in which it could facilitate.

The expression of *khutba* in *Masjid Kauman* reinforces the dissemination of moderate aspects of Islam, politeness and good manners. The researchers found no *khutba* material that contained hatred, blasphemy, verbal abuse and provocation for acts of violence. The material of the *khutba* precisely emphasizes the importance of moderation in religion, tolerance and the call for peace. Ulil Abshar Abdalla, the leader of the Liberal Islam Network, stated that “our mosques are no longer a reliable place for people to be able to add intelligent religious insights, but instead, a place to care for “magic” or mediocrity. Not infrequently, in the mosque precisely, the crowd crammed with demagoguery, lectures filled with clichés, repetition of boring material, and sometimes verbal abuse that nourishes hatred” (Abdalla, 2006). However, the

khutbas in *Masjid Kauman* are totally different from what is stated by Ulil Abshar. This seems to be due to the fact that the mosque still upholds the local tradition and morality of the elderly religious leader with moderate NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) background.

Maintaining Social and Cultural Basis for Preacher and Topics Selection

Situated in the religious area where most of residents embraced the Sunni tradition, particularly those from Nahdlatul Ulama followers, it has made *Kauman* mosque more progressive and moderate in expressing Islamic values. These spirits have also been reflected in the mosque's strategy to accommodate and select the preachers and their topics. Under authoritarian regime, the mosque only accommodated five to seven preachers per year. However, after the mosque management reformed in 1990s, the mosque has accommodated diverse and more colourful preachers either from religious or non-religious backgrounds. According to the mosque director, the mosque's management has given opportunity for the preachers their own topics but it seems that the major *sunni* Islamic tradition becomes one of the most influencing factor that should be accommodated by the preachers as stipulated in the following interview with the mosque director:

The content of the khutba ideally should be based on the need and conditions for the audience, most of whom still embrace traditional Islamic tradition (sunni) (44 years-old Mosque director).

There were multiple processes undergone in the preacher selection process in *Kauman* mosque. First, *Takmir* or the mosque committee held public hearings to gather suggestions and feedback from the community, Ministry of Religious Affairs at the local levels, and the surrounding areas. *Takmir* also opened a call for interests from many potential preachers in the area. These processes were unusual compared to other mosques given the level of prestige

which is situated in the higher level of Muslim community centers in the region. The previous year's preachers would be reconsidered if there were no negative feedback and comments from the congregation. Comments mostly came from the community such as the speech style of preachers, incompetency on religious matters, and values contradicting with the congregations.

According to the mosque director, there were ten preachers delivering *khutbas* in 2015 and then were re-invited again in 2016 after having positive feedback from the community. But if some appointed preachers might be unable to deliver the *khutba*, the *takmir* will select the substitute by asking a reference from the previously invited preachers. This was known as *shahadah* which was based on the personal guarantee of current preachers. Meanwhile, when a preacher is unable to deliver the *khutba* due to sudden technical matter such as illness or traffic jam, he has to notify the *takmir*. *Takmir* will immediately find substitute from the preachers list that are usually consisted of regular preachers who are members of *Takmir* and reside around *Masjid Kauman*.

In 2015, the *Takmir* appointed 51 preachers originated from diverse backgrounds such as universities, corporates, and government bodies. For instance, there are three university leaders who became preachers, namely Professor Muhibbin from Walisongo State Islamic University, Dr. Noor Ahmad from Wahid Hasyim University and Professor Muhtarom HM from Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic University. Furthermore, there were also some preachers who are Muslim leaders such as Kyai Asluh, Kyai Hanif Ismail, and Kyai Abdul Hamid Baidlowi.

Against this backdrop, it is evident that *takmir* in *Kauman* mosque has a good *khutba* management. They have an adequate capacity to manage schedules of *khutba* systematically while maintaining the quality. In terms of the topics of the sermons, based on the interviews with the *Takmir*, preachers considered some

factors in deciding the themes of the *khutba*. Preachers often incorporated themes based on the recent or upcoming religious and national days such as Maulid Nabi (the birth of Prophet Muhammad), Isra' Miraj, and Eid al Mubarak. Some themes were also selected to commemorate events such as the independence of Indonesia, the hero day, and the educational day. Some preachers incorporated these days as the main theme of the *khutba* and the additional theme by explaining the days in the beginning and continued with another topic. With regard to using the religious and national days, there was an issue of repetitions as preachers might deliver the same topic in the previous year. One preacher elaborated on this issue:

To be honest, some of the preachers already mastered some topics in mind related to religious and national big days in Indonesia. In some occasions, we do not need to prepare again and we might contextualize on the current issue. However, this could also lead to boredom for the congregation as they have been heard over and over (42 years-old preacher).

Takmir of *Masjid Kauman* has tried to improve the *khutba* management by enriching the theme diversification. In order to maintain the quality of the *khutba*, *Kauman* mosque also increased its effort to anticipate inappropriate topics potentially inserted by the preachers. To anticipate the situation, the mosque committee tried to review the topics by directly discussing with the preachers prior to their *khutba*. By adopting the strategy applied by one of the biggest mosques in Jakarta, namely Sunda Kelapa Mosque, the preacher must arrive in the mosque at 10.00 am or 2 hours before the Friday prayer starts. Therefore, there is enough time for reviewing and discussing the *khutba* materials. Sunda Kelapa Mosque in Jakarta is able to do that because the preacher was also given a proper *bisyarah*. For beginner preachers, Takmir provides no less than Rp 1.5 million rupiah, while for the senior preacher, Takmir provides no less than Rp 3 million rupiah for a *khutba*. This is what makes the Jakarta Sunda

Kelapa Mosque has the courage to discipline preacher according to takmir rules, especially in the suitability of theme and timelines.

The committee of *Kauman* mosque cannot totally follow the management of Sunda Kelapa mosque. According to Kyai Hammad Ma'shum (46 years-old), the head of Masjid Kauman Foundation, one of reasons is the limited *bisyarah*. The preacher gets for Rp 350 thousand for every *khutba*, which is relatively high for some mosques in Semarang, though not yet feasible. On the other hand, many preachers come from various backgrounds such as religious leader in Central Java, and also those having high educational degrees such as Professor and Doctor. So it could be a bit reluctant to review their *khutba* materials.

However, *Kauman* mosque is relatively successful in performing the spirit of moderation, progressiveness and open-mindedness in order to encourage socio-economic transformation among the congregation. They can be very open to accept the diverse themes of the *khutba* on the goodness of life as human beings and as Muslims, including the *khutba* on health. Muslim society can gradually learn to step forward in implementing Islamic values rather than focusing too much on demagogy and repetition of religious doctrines. In other local traditional mosques, sometimes there are some objections protesting the theme or the sermon which are not directly related to religious doctrines. For instance, the themes of cardiovascular health or medical affairs are conceived as "non-religious" so they should not be delivered in the sacred *khutba* forum. However, what had been done by *Kauman* mosque has become a learning process for the Muslim society to become more progressive and open minded in implementing Islamic values. So far, there is neither criticism nor objection regarding to the theme and content of *khutba* in *Kauman* mosque. That could be caused by the feeling of *ewuh pakewuh* (hesitation) as a Javanese characteristic in criticizing others. However, that situation could also indicate the

progressiveness and higher literacy of Muslim community surrounding the mosque.

Conclusion

The case elaborated in this research has shown the shift of the mosque's role from religious to social-economic oriented. Given the spirit of progressiveness, *Kauman* mosque has played a great role as a center of excellence in strengthening social harmony, political literacy and social awareness over particular issues. However, it should be underlined that the mosque, as a dynamic institution, is highly dependent upon the nature of Islamic traditions and local culture within which the mosque is located. Therefore, attempts to maintain its social and cultural basis must be supported simultaneously by every stakeholder in the state and society. The stronger the basis, the greater the impacts they can generate. As a tangible manifestation of Islam, the mosque with balances religious and socio-economic orientation can gradually erase global perception where the mosque has been previously depicted as the place for producing fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. Conversely, the case of *Kauman* mosque in Semarang, Central Java can be copied and adopted by Muslim communities across the archipelago to properly govern their mosques as the forefront to fight against religious extremism and terrorism.

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