

Book Review;
**Sufistic Preaching: a Means of Catharsis for a
Psychological Problem**

Book Review:

Sufistic Preaching: a Means of Catharsis for a Psychological Problem

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In his published M.A. thesis, *Dakwah Sufistik Kang Jalal Menentramkan Jiwa, Mencerahkan Pikiran* (Sufistic/Islamic-Mystical-Dimension Preaching of Mr. Jalal Pacifies the Soul and Enlightens the Mind), Rosyidi does not mention explicitly his key question, his argument, and his hypothesis. However, I grasp them from my reading of this published thesis. Rasyidi seems to concern himself with answering a question: why does a number of urban people, who are interested in the mystical dimension of Islamic preaching of Kang Jalal (Jalaluddin Rakhmat), increases in Indonesia (p, 17)? Rosyidi emerges to answer this question by arguing that Rakhmat's preaching prioritizes noble character (*akhlak*) over [differences in religious] jurisprudence (*fiqih*) (p. 7). This argument corresponds to the title of Rakhmat's book: *Dahulukan Akhlak di atas Fiqih* (Prioritize Akhlak over Fiqih).

Dakwah Sufistik contains five chapters, in which Rosyidi appears to hypothesize that Rakhmat's Sufism in his preaching releases the psychological problem of his audience (p. 22). I base this hypothesis on Rasyidi's idea that this releasing is a dominant factor of his respondents. Rasyidi takes this factor from an oral lecture of Komaruddin Hidayat, an Indonesian Muslim intellectual [now, incumbent Rector of Universitas Islam Indonesia Internasional/UIII], in a workshop of urban Sufism at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN: now, UIN) in Jakarta (p. 21). Although Rosyidi does not mention that he conducts quantitative approach, he supports his implicit argument with some quantitative examples in two paragraphs. Rosyidi does not explain how many respondents he has interviewed.

The quantitative examples are as follows. Some of Rakhmat's congregation of the Centre for the Studies on Sufism (Pusat Kajian Tasawwuf) of Tazkiya Sejati [Knight Purification of Soul] Foundation in Jakarta said that having listened to Rakhmat's speeches, they felt better in their knowledge about Islam, in practicing their rituals, and in conducting their charities. Next, 88.5% of the members of Tazkiya Sejati felt calm and tranquil after they listened to Rakhmat's sermons. Furthermore, 83.4% of them felt more tolerant in facing their problems. 70.5% of them overcome their problems successfully. Finally, 83.4% of them felt close to God, and able to control their emotions (p. 123).

Rosyidi agrees with the idea that Rakhmat's speeches assist his urban audience to solve their psychological problems. Nonetheless, Rosyidi does not discuss Rakhmat's worldview of happiness. Neglecting this point has led Rosyidi to identify Rakhmat as a 'hero;' that is, as if Rakhmat's ability to speak is a given capability. In contrast, Rakhmat criticized himself that he was also once nervous and anxious when, for instance, a state company in Indonesia invited him suddenly to be a substitute speaker of a strategic planning.

I found this example in Jalaluddin's *Tafsir Kebahagiaan* (the Qur'anic Exegesis of Happiness) (Rakhmat 2010: 120). Rosyidi does

not engage himself in a question about how Rakhmat leads his community, in particular the congregation of *Al-Munawwarah* Mosque in Bandung, to recover their desires to be close to God. I found this evidence in Rakhmat's *Meraih Cinta Ilahi* (Reaching for Divine Love) (Rakhmat 2008). In fact, Rosyidi lists 20 Rakhmat's books without cultivating Rakhmat's major question, his argument and his hypothesis (pp. 36-41).

The way Rosyidi positions Rakhmat as a hero emerges clearly in his conclusion. Here, he concludes that Rakhmat has been making a path to the noble-character-oriented preaching for a long time in Indonesia. Next, Rosyidi compares this orientation to another Bandung's preacher, KH. Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym). According to Rosyidi, Rakhmat's orientation in his preaching is similar to Aa Gym's expounding of his "heart management" (*manajemen qalbu*) concept (p. 127). Rosyidi talks about Aa Gym in his (Rosyidi's) conclusion while he does not discuss about Aa Gym in any section of his M.A. thesis.

Apart from these gaps, Rosyidi is sharp when he refers to Rakhmat's *Rindu Rasul* (Longing for God's Messenger) in which he finds Rakhmat's shift from his *fiqih*-oriented preaching to the *akhlak*-oriented one in the middle of the 1980s. However, Rosyidi neglects to include this historical fact into a discussion whether or not this shift refers to Rakhmat's metamorphosis from his modernist Muslim identity to his neo-modernist one. Rosyidi does not mention these two idioms either. Moreover, I do not find any reference of Rosyidi's book to *Al-Tanwir* bulletin whereas this booklet is a highly important tool to see Rakhmat's shift to his neo modernist attitude.

In term of authorship, Rosyidi's book is his published thesis. He accomplished his thesis when he pursued his M.A. in the Preaching and Communication Program in the Graduate School at UIN (Universitas Islam Negeri) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. He accomplished his classes in three years from 2000 to 2003, during which he wrote his thesis under the supervision of H.M. Yunan Yusuf, M.A., and that of A.

Wahib Mu`thi, M.A. Next, the editorial team of Paramadina Group in Jakarta and some of his colleagues contributed to giving their comments to Rosyidi. They encouraged him to adjust to what the publisher recommended (pp. iv, x) of he wanted to have his thesis published. Finally, Paramadina published this thesis into a book in 2004 (iv).

The gaps in Rosyidi's published thesis push me to express them in this book review. I recommend that the students of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta exercise systematic research proposal starting from mapping their literature reviews. This academic rehearsal might help them overcome many gaps in their studies.

References

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