



Comics, Da'wa, and the Representation of Religious Moderation

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Abstract

This study aims to show the representation of religious moderation which is generated in three comic books on the topic of hijrah, a term now connoting a change in behavior from negative behaviors to good ones in relation to obedience to the rules of Islam. The choice of the topic was dictated by the fact that hijrah has been on a growing trend among middle-class Muslims in past years. This is literature research using interpretive method of qualitative research. The theory used in this research was Stuart Hall's theory of representation. Hall stated that meanings are determined by language. In this study, the researcher tried to convey the meanings attached to pictures and dialogues in three comic books under study to show the representation of religious moderation. This research came to a conclusion that the three comic books on the topic of hijrah (*Black Metal Istiqomah* by Achmad Deptian, *Hijrah; Saatnya Berubah* by Dzulhilman Roslan and Megat Mohd Faris and *iQomic volume 2: Hijrah* in an anthology compiled by 14 comic-book writers) demonstrate and the value of religious moderation. Anti-violence, tolerance, and acceptance of local cultures are often taken as the indicators of religious moderation. Those indicators can be seen from the narration (dialogues and plots) developed and visual images produced in those comic books.

Key Words:

Comics, da'wa, religious moderation

Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan representasi moderasi beragama yang dihasilkan dalam tiga buku komik dengan topik hijrah, sebuah istilah yang sekarang berkonotasi dengan perubahan perilaku dari perilaku negatif ke perilaku yang baik dalam kaitannya dengan ketaatan pada aturan-aturan Islam. Pemilihan topik ini ditentukan oleh fakta bahwa hijrah telah menjadi tren yang berkembang di kalangan Muslim kelas menengah dalam beberapa

tahun terakhir. Studi ini merupakan penelitian kepustakaan dengan menggunakan metode interpretatif penelitian kualitatif. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori representasi Stuart Hall. Hall menyatakan bahwa makna ditentukan oleh bahasa. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti berusaha menyampaikan makna yang melekat pada gambar dan dialog dalam tiga buku komik yang diteliti untuk menunjukkan representasi moderasi beragama. Penelitian ini sampai pada kesimpulan bahwa ketiga buku komik dengan topik hijrah (Black Metal Istiqomah karya Achmad Deptian, Hijrah; Saatnya Berubah karya Dzulhilman Roslan dan Megat Mohd Faris dan iQomic volume 2: Hijrah dalam antologi yang disusun oleh 14 penulis komik) menunjukkan nilai moderasi beragama. Anti kekerasan, toleransi, dan penerimaan terhadap budaya lokal sering kali dijadikan indikator moderasi beragama. Indikator-indikator tersebut dapat dilihat dari narasi (dialog dan plot) yang dikembangkan dan gambar-gambar visual yang dihasilkan dalam komik-komik tersebut.

Kata Kunci:

Komik, Dakwah, Moderasi Beragama

Introduction

Islamic da'wa in Indonesia has undergone a rapid development recently: the number of da'is multiplies and those da'is offer various content and media of da'wa. The media of da'wa develops courtesy of the technological advancement in this digital era, thus enabling da'wa processes to unfold on any platform. This makes da'wa not limited to activities in the pulpit, but it can occur in the form of online postings on the social media (from Twitter to Tiktok) and digital or web portals.

Indeed, media for da'wa have developed in such a way thanks to the development of new media; however, conventional media for the purpose of da'wa are still frequently used to aim the da'wa at heterogeneous *mad'us* (communicants). It is widely known that da'wa occurs on television and radio programmes, in weekly da'wa columns (usually every Friday) of newspapers, and even in comic books. Those conventional media continue to be used amid the rapid development of new media.

In this respect, comic books constitute a medium for da'wa which deserves to receive serious attention. Comic books or stories in comic strips have special characteristics. The readers of comic books are mostly

children or teenagers, although some adults are also likely to read them. Comic books are made light and popular reading, usually telling fiction despite other genres of comic books like science comics and comic journalism. At a point in time, comic books thrived in Indonesia to the extent that many big cities saw the development of comic book rentals. Books stores have shelves particularly containing comic books even to date.

Da'wa comics deal with wide-ranging topics, including the torment of the grave, stories on prophets, Sufi stories, stories of exemplary Muslim models, and actual topics like *hijrah*. The comics on the topic of *hijrah* are interesting to be taken into consideration because *hijrah* is a religious phenomenon which has drawn the attention of many Indonesians in recent years. A number of celebrities and musicians have declared themselves to be in a *hijrah* process (they are determined to change their behavior into better one), some *hijrah* communities have occurred in big cities, and the topic of *hijrah* has come up in social media, books, and comics.

This research was aimed at showing the values of religious moderation put in three comics on the topic of *hijrah*, which are *Black Metal Istiqomah* by Achmad Deptian (Salam Books, 2018), *Hijrah: Saatnya Berubah* by Dzulhilman Roslan and Megat Mohd Faris (Salsabila, 2020) and *iQomic volume 2* entitled *Hijrah* in an anthology of 14 comic writers (Salsabila, 2019). The three comics were chosen because in addition to their topic of *hijrah*, they have been released in the past four years, when *hijrah* has become the main topic of conversation and discussion (Deptian 2018; Roslan and Faris 2020; Icomic 2019). Besides, previous research discussed comic books as media for da'wa did not direct special attention to the ones on *hijrah*, nor did it relate the topic to religious moderation.

Religious moderation is important to be studied because among the greatest challenges Indonesia must respond to are problems of conservatism, radicalism and terrorism. Radical moves and terror threats

in Indonesia are carried out in the name of religion. This means that religious moderation becomes a relevant question to be answered. Radical ideologies which end up as terror threats are often imposed by someone's reading, especially when he/she learns religious teachings without any adequate supervision of acknowledged masters. Without any objective tests, reading materials are likely to be misunderstood and to mislead readers; what is more, some reading materials were originally written to be media for an indoctrination of radical ideologies.

Comic books are worth reviewing. They tend to avoid speaking on complex topics, but it is not impossible that some comics carry subversive, radical messages. In light of this, comics become potentially risky if read by emotionally and intellectually immature, young people. In this regard, da'wa comics should not reinforce messages which resonate with radicalism or even terrorism in the name of God. Instead, it is the message of Islam as a religion extending a mercy to the worlds that should be preached in those comics.

The wide spread of da'wa comics speaking on *hijrah* up to a point can be said to be a part of popular Islamism. Hasan (2018) explored Dominik M. Muller's theory of popular Islamism. According to this theory, popular Islamism is characterized by a desire to establish a dialogue between Islam and modernity, a belief that trends of popular cultures can grow in harmony with the spirit of asserting the supremacy of God. The ultimate aims of Islam and popular cultures can go hand in hand in the midst of globalization.

As of comic books, in 2017 an Indonesian comic writer was given a penalty for the instilment of values considered to be intolerant in Marvel's comic (Ginanjari 2017). Ardian Syaf, the related comic writer, inserted the Qur'anic verses, namely Al-Maidah: 51 and 212, in a comic entitled X-Men Gold #1 which he wrote. In response to the penalty, instead of feeling guilty, he stated "A governor had blasphemed our Holy Book, but the

police did not treat him as a blasphemer. As many as 7 million people lodged their protest in the 212 protest. QS 5:51 is the Qur'anic verse which the governor insulted. 'This is imprinted in my mind'. This shows how comic books have been an arena for ideological warfare.

Nowadays, comic books are used as media for da'wa by a number of da'is, one of whom is Habib Husein Ja'far Al-Hadar. He wrote a comic called "Habib n Friends" which he posts on his Instagram account. The da'wa strategy of Habib Husein through comic books can be seen as an effort to promote religious moderation. This is so important that religious moderation does not stay in the ivory tower and is difficult to understand. Therefore, the values of religious moderation should be readily interpreted and adopted for popular versions and forms, and Habib Husein is an example of a da'i who easily interprets religious moderation. Habib Husein Ja'far Al Hadar has been popular among the young because of his da'wa contents considered relevant to Generation Z and Millennials. We know that he has collaborated with a number of stand-up comedians like Oza Rangkuti, Coki Pardede, and Tretan Muslim among others for the purpose that his work can be accepted by young generation.

The moderate da'wa by Habib Husein Ja'far Alhadar by means of a comic book entitled "Habib n Friends" is motivated by a spirit to present light and humorous da'wa content. The comic book used question-answering models as its way of telling stories. The writer also raises such favorite topics relevant to the world of youth as metaverse, verified badge (centang biru) and crazy rich. He minds his language in order to be easily understood by his target audience (*mad'u*). His choice to use comic books, which belong to popular media, as media for da'wa can be regarded as an effort to extend the scope of his da'wa.

Comic books, also known as comic strips, are featured in flat-panel display. They tell a story in a chronological sequence from scene to scene. Some stories end in a standalone comic book, some in a series

of books. Maharsi (2014) considered comic books to be a form of visual communication (a combination of texts and pictures) which can convey information in a modest and understandable way. According to Soedarso, comics are an art form with pictures. Not only are they books that display interesting visual images and offer cheap entertainment, but they also form intellectual, visual communication which can communicate messages in universal language easy to understand (Soedarso 2015). Meanwhile, Scott McCloud (2001) defined comics as the juxtaposition of pictures or images and symbols (both are adjacent to each other).

If traced back, comics have been known in Indonesia since the prehistoric time, which at least can be seen in the reliefs of Borobudur temple (1460 scenes). The scenes in the reliefs were carved in such a chronological order that they recount a story, just like the method of storytelling in present comics. In addition to the reliefs of Borobudur temple, the introduction of *wayang beber* (a Javanese traditional puppet theatre) can also be seen as the earlier form of comics in Indonesia (Soedarso 2015).

Comics during development are deemed to become effective learning media, especially for school-age children (Budiarti and Haryanto 2016). Comics in Indonesia are then intertwined with da'wa. Comics on hell torment, which was once highly popular in a particular time in Indonesia, constitute tangible proof of this stage of development (Teguh 2018). Later, da'wa comics continue to develop and speak on various topics, ranging from topics aimed at children like comics on stories of prophets and Sufi stories to topics with underlying ideological messages. Comics continue to be produced and to reach a mass market to date.

Da'wa in this research is defined as an invitation to good things given by a *da'i* to *mad'u* by means of certain da'wa media. Da'wa is ideally carried out by still complying with a number of ethical codes, including da'i's not making discrimination, not saying words which he/she cannot

put into action, not telling something beyond people's understanding, not committing blasphemy against any other religion, and not incurring a charge (Aziz 2006).

Research on da'wa has been conducted lately. Some of the research is on da'wa through digital devices and media (Zulhazmi and Hastuti 2018; Wahyudi 2021; Arifin 2019; Hew 2018; Asmar 2020; Nisa 2018), and some highlights da'wa processes to the youth (Zulhazmi and Priyanti 2020; Irmansyah 2020a; Amna 2019; Addini 2019; Fajriani and Sugandi 2019). The previous research has witnessed that da'wa processes are in rapid development in which they are intertwined with technology, culture, education, economy, and other social elements.

With respect to da'wa, there is some research on comics and da'wa. The research by Romario & Aisyah (2019) found the commodification religion in the da'wa comic on Instagram @iqomic. Not only does the Instagram account post Islamic comics, but it does also sell comic books, provide training and put advertisements. What is interesting about the comic posted on @iqomic is the mention of Qur'anic verses or prophetic hadith in each post. Romario and Aisyah saw that @iqomic adds variety to da'wa comics in which the topics on humor, romances, and politics have been dominant.

Adilah, Ridwan, & Solahudin (2019) did research on a da'wa comic posted on an Instagram account @black metal istiqomah. The comic uses plain language and raises simple matters to aim for readers of young age. The most interesting feature of this comic is its characterization which displays a figure in a visual appearance of a black metal musician who tries to follow Islamic teachings despite a dark aura around him. The comic @black metal istiqomah gained a considerable momentum as it appeared at the same time as the then-widespread phenomenon of *hijrah*.

The research by Nasrullah & Sari (2014) considers comics to be an effective alternative medium for da'wa. They can be such a flexible medium

that all people with no age limit. Nasrullah and Sari researched the comic “Si Bujang” by adopting a semiotic analysis. The research found that the comic called “Si Bujang” shows a good example of great leadership in Islam. Subsequently, the research of Inayah, Anwar, & Bahrudin (2020) focuses on the comic entitled *99 Pesan Nabi* (99 Messages of the Prophet). The research found that messages about social morality are the most dominant topic in the comic, and it is followed respectively by messages about Islamic laws and theology.

This research focuses on the topic on religious moderation. It can be easily understood as a choice to have a particular viewpoint, attitude, and moderate behavior and to avoid extreme measures and religious immoderation (RI 2019). Meanwhile, Shihab (2019) defined religious moderation, or *washatiyyah*, as the balance of the world and the hereafter in dealing with any problem and an effort to adapt to the existing situation on the basis of religious guidance. Religious moderation is necessary to be fostered in plural and multicultural societies of Indonesia. The implementation of religious moderation is expected to preserve social harmony.

The indicators of religious moderations include 1) state commitment, 2) tolerance, 3) antiviolenace and 4) acceptance and respect for local cultures. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, these indicators show how properly ones implement religious moderation in Indonesia and how great the vulnerability they show is. The indicators provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs are also the ones used in thi research. This means that the identification of how successfully religious moderation is put into action is based on those four indicators.

In short, state commitment is the most important indicator to assess how strongly the viewpoint, attitude, and the way people practice their religions influence their loyalty to the basic national consensus, especially to Pancasila as it is the Indonesian state philosophy, their attitude towards

ideologies opposite to Pancasila, and nasionalism. Tolerance is one's attitude of allowing other people to adhere to a particular belief, express their belief, and air their opinions although their beliefs and opinions are different from his/her own beliefs and opinions. Under this definition, tolerance refers to openness, patience, voluntary acts, and gentleness with differences (RI 2019).

Religious behaviors accommodating local cultures can be used to accept religious practices which accommodate local cultures and traditions. Those people with moderate views tend to be more open and friendlier to local traditions and cultures in their religious practices as long as those traditions and cultures do not contradict the teachings of Islam. In contrast, radicalism, or violence, in the context of religious moderation can be seen as an ideology (idea or opinions) and a view which calls for a change in the political and social system by performing aggressive, violent action in the forms of verbal, physical or psychological abuses, in the name of religions (RI 2019).

It is necessary to review previous studies on religious moderation. The research by Sutrisno (2019), for example, highlighted religious moderation implemented at educational institutions. It is a necessary requirement which one have to meet to challenge extremism. In line with this research, Fahri & Zainuri (2019) mentioned the founding of inclusive, moderate Islamic educational institutions can be effective to oppose radicalism. Subsequently, Faiqah & Pransiska (2018) stated that moderate values of Islam can blend into local values. This is highly instrumental in practicing Islam in Indonesia which is rich in traditional cultural expressions.

The research of Amin (2014) studied religious moderation mentioned in literatures on Islamic laws. Although it cannot be said to be an in-depth study, this research arrived at a conclusion that literatures about *fiqh* (Islamic laws) encourage the values of *washatiyah* or moderation. Other research on religious moderation was conducted by Darlis (2013) who

stated that religious moderation can provide multicultural societies with workable solutions. He said that religious moderation embodies the values of tolerance, justice, balance, and flexibility. Meanwhile, in his research, Yusuf (2018) explored the relationship between religious moderation and the three dimensions of Islam, namely *aqidah* (Islamic theology), *shariah* (Islamic laws), and Sufism (Islamic mysticism).

With relation to the phenomenon of *hijrah*, an amount of research on *hijrah* has been also conducted by some scholars (Lyansari 2018; Irmansyah 2020b; Addini 2019; Amna 2019; Annisa 2018; Sunesti, Hasan, and Azca 2018). In their research, they spoke on some celebrities' *hijrah*, the communities of *hijrah*, and the phenomenon in general. What was interesting was the fact that some researchers analyzed *hijrah* critically and considered it to be artificial – it is a growing trend followed by young Muslims living in big cities. Unfortunately, little was research on literatures on *hijrah* conducted amidst the abundance of motivational books, novels and comics on the topic of *hijrah*.

Some research on this topic at best mentioned above only focused on trying to reveal da'wa messages instilled in a da'wa comic; meanwhile, research focusing on the value of religious moderation promoted in da'wa comics, especially the ones on *hijrah*, is hard to find. Likewise, research on religious moderation and *hijrah* never involved researching comic books. It was to fill the unfilled vacancy that this research on religious moderation in comics was conducted

The three comics chosen to be discussed in this research will be analyzed from the perspective of Stuart Hall's theory of representation. This theory holds that meanings are constructed and interchanged by each member within a cultural group. Representation channels concepts in people's minds by means of languages enabling people to define objects, humans, and real events into the imaginary world for objects, humans, and unreal events. This means that people's educational background and

understanding have a decisive influence in their signification process (Hall 2003).

Comics and the Phenomena of Hijrah

This research focuses on the comics *Black Metal Istiqomah* by Achmad Deptian, *Hijrah, Saatnya Berubah* by Dzulhilman Roslan and Megat Mohd Faris, and the series *iQomic volume 2* entitled *Hijrah* in an anthology by 14 comic writers. Those three comics share the same topic, namely *hijrah*, a term which represents a growing trend among a group of mid-class Muslims and arouses the interest of many researchers.

In the comic *Hijrah; Saatnya Berubah* by Dzulhilman Roslan and Megat Mohd Faris, the researcher chose a story entitled “Nilai Seribu”. The story shows the values of religious moderation.

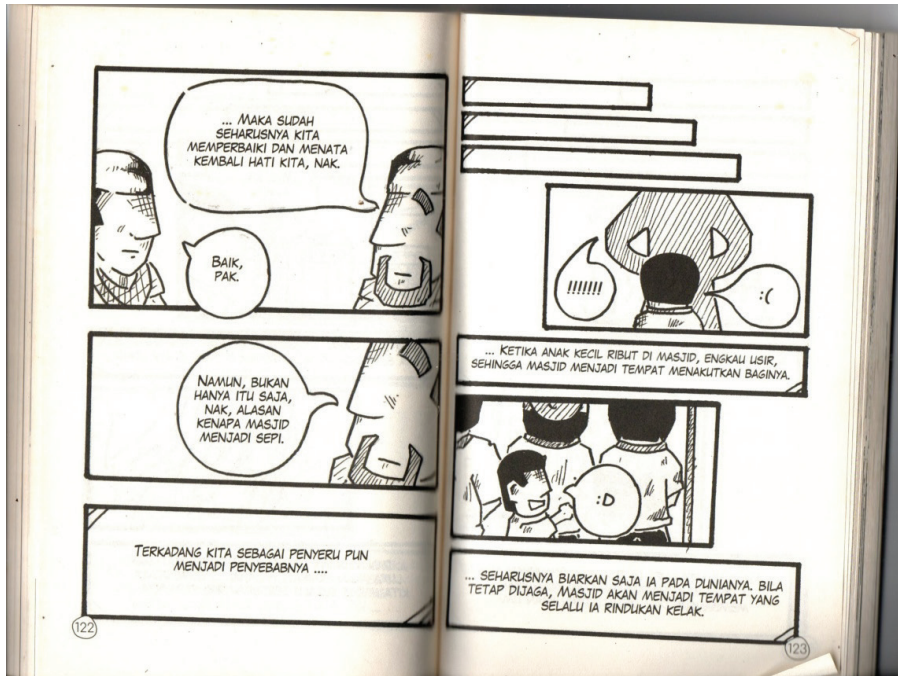


At the beginning of the story, a young man in a cloak and a turban, or a headdress, which are often associated with being a Muslim, is depicted stopping a bus, and the bus is driven by a non-Muslim driver. A single fare to the city costs him IDR 4.000. He pays IDR 5.000, but surprisingly he gets change of IDR 2.000. Then he gives the extra money back to the bus driver.

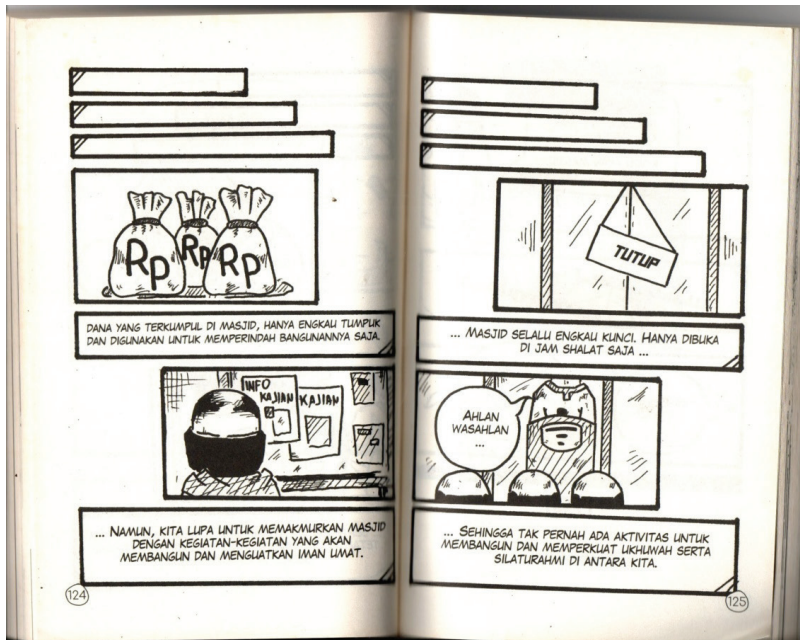


In the second part of the comic "Nilai Seribu", the non-Muslim bus driver is depicted telling the young man that hardly do people pay extra money back because they consider it only small change. The driver adds that he often gives money more to the passengers than expected to question their honesty. The story ends with the statement of the driver that he believes Islam more deeply thanks to the honesty of one of his Muslim passengers, who feel truly grateful to do something which makes others receive divine guidance.

Next, in *iQomic volume 2: Hijrah*, the researcher chose a story entitled “Masjidku”. Like the previous story, the story “Masjidku” also cherishes the value of religious moderation.

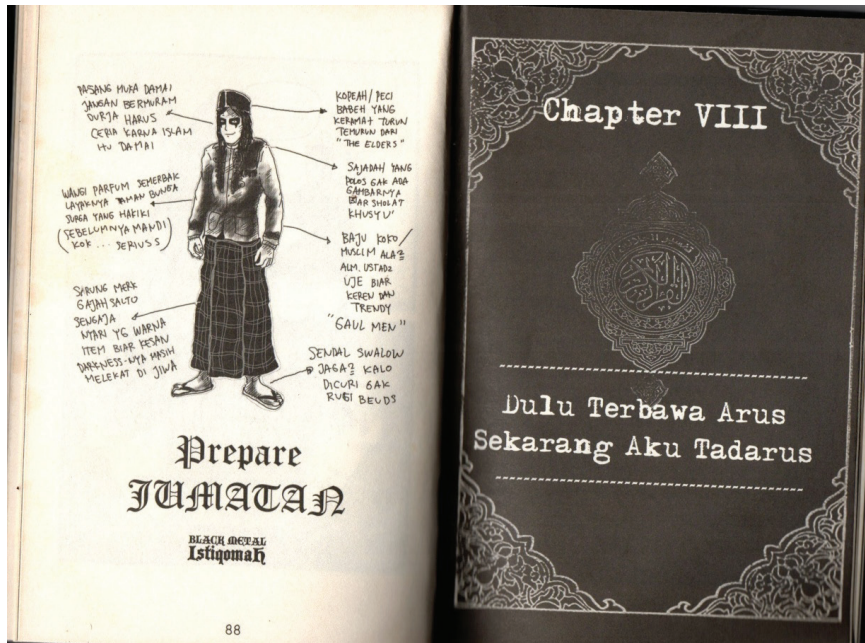


This story tells a conversation between two individuals about mosques. The problem raised in the conversation is as to why mosques have recently become dull places. The comic says thereof: *When children play and let out noise in mosques, you scare them in such a way that they feel frightened to go there. It adds: You should have let them be. If kept that way, mosques will be the place they always miss in the future.*



This scene states on masque infaq that the fund collected is only invested in building development, while attempts to prosper mosques by holding social activities and community empowerment are often abandoned. The story also tells that mosques are often locked except in prayer times. As a consequence, this disrupts the process of informal, social interaction among congregation as a gesture of good friendship (*silaturahmi*). In the end, the comic invites readers to make action to develop community to the extent that they long for coming to mosques.

Meanwhile, the researcher chose some scenes of the comic *Black Metal Istiqomah* by Achmad Deptian he considered to foster the values of religious moderation as what follows.

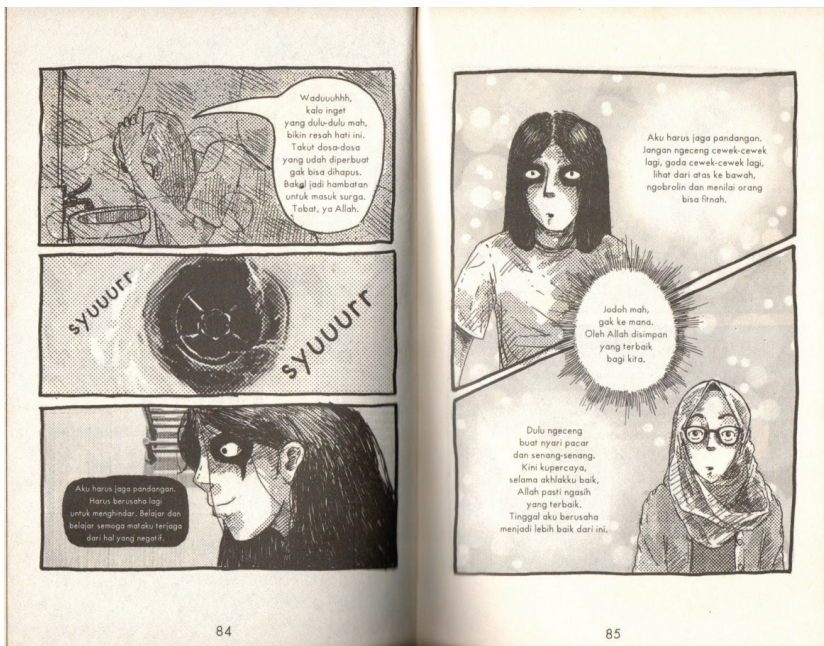


This scene depicts a man with a unique appearance: kopian, baju koko (a traditional Malay-Indonesian men Muslim shirt), sarong, and slipper. The comic describes the appearance in detail: *this sarong is under the brand of gajah salto. I intentionally choose the black one in order that it still brings the darkness image to mind. I choose to slip on the slipper Swalow by brand, so that I will not feel a great loss in case that I have to lose it. I am wearing baju koko like the one Ustadz Uje used to wear so that I look cool and trendy. I bring with me a simple, artless prayer mat so that I can establish prayers solemnly. The kopian I have on my head is the one passed from my forefathers. Have a smile on your face and do not look gloomy because Islam is a religion of peace.*



The pages 94 and 95 show the main character of the story reading a book, establishing a prayer, and listening to music. When the panel shows him reading a book, the narration delivers the character's interior monologue: *I have to catch-up with what I have missed, and I have to memorize short Qur'anic chapters once again.* When depicting him establishing a prayer, it is written in the speech ballon that he is reciting the chapter Al-Kafirun. In the panel in which he is depicted putting a headset on his ears (implying that he is listening to music), the speech ballon delivers his interior monologue: *Now I start to recite the Qur'an again. I will learn from the basic to the extent that I can recite the Qur'an fluently. I wonder what life I will live in the future if I cannot recite the Qur'an. From now on, I will recite the Qur'an as frequently as I listen to music.* The speech ballon continues saying: *In this modern era, MP3 can be used for listening either to music or to the Qur'an. Is this not a support facility which Muslims can use properly? I think it is, especially Islam is a timeless religion.*

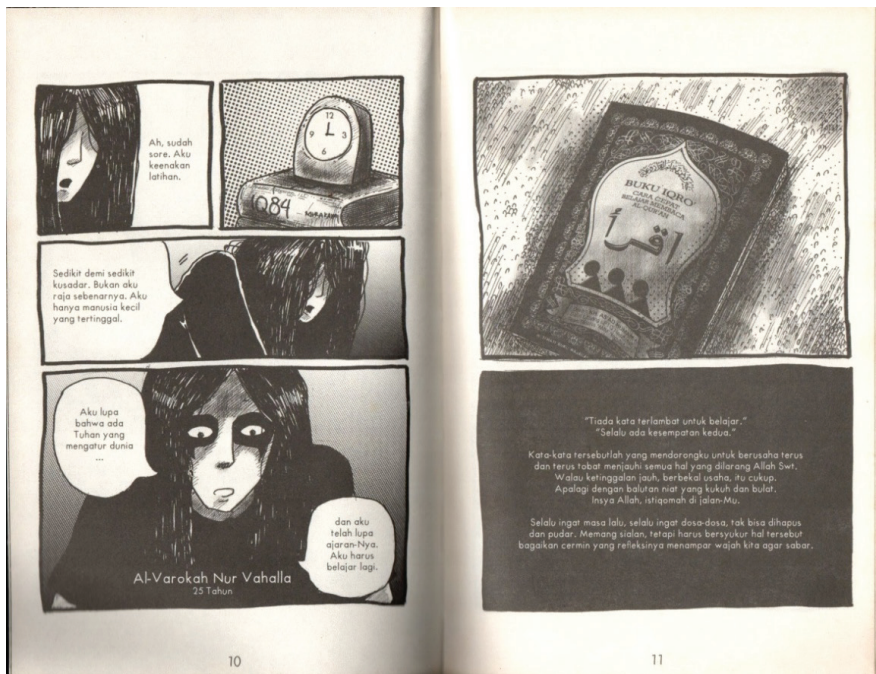
Therefore, the device should be used to its fullest extent. There is nothing wrong with reciting the Qur'an via MP3 with which we can listen to and memorize the words of Allah by taking advantage of technology.



At page 84, the main character is depicted standing in front of a bathroom sink. The speech balloon at the page says: *Oh my! I sink into deep despair every time I remember committing evil deeds. I am afraid that my past mistakes are not forgiven and they will prevent me from ascending to heaven. Oh Allah, I seek Your forgiveness and repent to You.* The next panel shows the main character's face and gives a great detail of his penetrating gaze. The speech balloon in the panel says *I must hold my gaze not to fall on something forbidden. I must try to do so again and again.*

Subsequently, on page 85, the speech balloon presents his interior monologue (reflection): *I must hold my gaze. I must not show off to girls, flirt with them, or ogle them. Speaking about individuals and making a judgement about them may cause discord.* The bleary stare of the main character heightens vivid

impression of the reflection. The narration tells a traditional saying: *'If you do not find love, it will find you. Allah always gives us the best.'* The page ends with an image of a girl in hijab, a head covering for Muslim women. The girl was depicted with an expressionless face. The image is related to what the main character bears in mind: *I used to show off to girls to have a girlfriend or to have fun. From now on, I believe that Allah will manifest someone special into my life as long as I regulate good behavior. It is on me to be better and better.*



The page 10 shows that the main character of this story is a man with such long hair that it covers his eyes. This visual image goes along with a narration telling: *Oh, it is already afternoon. I dimly realized that I spent much time playing music.* The next scene presents the novel 1Q84 by Haruki Murakami on the table. The panel 1 of the next scene still displays an image of the main character with his eyes-covering, long hair. The speech balloon reveals what is in his mind: *I gradually realize that I am not the real king. I am but an unsophisticated little human.* The last panel at the page displays the

main character with his piercing gaze telling himself: *I forget the existence of God who rules the world. I have long contradicted His teaching. I must learn it again.*

At the next page, the visual image looks minimalist – it displays the cover of the book *Iqro'* against a black background. The page also displays a long narration telling: *It is never too late to learn. There are always second chances. These two sentences encourage me to never stop repenting and avoiding everything forbidden. Although I have much on which I must catch up, I think it is enough for me to struggle to get better. With noble intention and strong will, if it is God's will, I will be in the straight path. It is embarrassing for me not to forget my pasts and sins, as if they cannot be pushed away. However, those memories are like a mirror whose reflection stares back at me and agar sadar.*

Comics and the Values of Religious Moderation

The analysis which will be made in this part is based on the indicators of religious moderation developed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Those indicators include state commitment, tolerance, antiviolence and acceptance of and respect for local cultures. Besides, it is also based on Stuart Hall's statement that meanings are constructed through languages, which is in this case the narration (dialogue and story) in the comics.

In a close analysis, the comics involved in this research all demonstrate the values of religious moderation, although at a moderate level. In the comic entitled "Nilai Seribu", the value of religious moderation is represented by an interaction between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. The good social interaction between two individuals of two different religions is a good example of tolerance, which is one of the indicators of a moderate view as the difference in their religious beliefs does not prevent communication.

The comic "Nilai Seribu" depicts a non-Muslim bus driver being impressed by a Muslim passenger who maintains honesty and integrity about change, which draws the admiration of the bus driver. It is the honesty that encourages him to undergo hijrah.

In the comic entitled “Masjidku”, religious moderation is demonstrated by a tolerant attitude toward children. The comic writer suggests not scolding children or driving them away from mosques because such aggressive attitudes possibly cause those children to have no inner compulsion to come back to mosques. The attitude of the comic writer can be seen in the narration: *When children play and let out noise in mosques, you scare them in such a way that they feel frightened to go there. It adds: You should have let them be. If kept that way, mosques will be the place they always miss in the future.*

We often face the facts that children are driven away from mosques when they let out noise there. Mosque custodians or village elders are often found scolding children, or sometimes even tweaking their ears, when they see those children playing up or producing a lot of noise in mosques. The critique of the hostile acts is offered by the author of “Masjidku”. To some point, such critique is a representation of tolerant and moderate attitudes.

Religious moderation in the comic entitled “Black Metal Istiqomah”, meanwhile, is embodied in the main character of the comic, who is a black-metal musician who has decided to make a positive change in his attitude (*bijrah*). In one panel, the narration tells *“This sarong is under the brand of gajah salto. I intentionally choose the black one in order that it still brings the darkness image to mind. I choose to slip on the slipper Swallow by brand, so that I will not feel a great loss in case that I have to lose it. I am wearing baju koko like the one Ustadz Uje used to wear so that I look cool and trendy. I bring with me a simple, artless prayer mat so that I can establish prayers solemnly. The kopiah I have on my head is the one passed from my forefathers. Have a smile on your face and do not look gloomy because Islam is a religion of peace.”*

The narration provides two indicators of religious moderation, namely anti-violence and acceptance and respect for local cultures. The statement *“Have a smile on your face and do not look gloomy because Islam is a religion of peace”* serves as the indicator of the value of anti-violence.

Although black metal music is considered to be heavy and loud music and associated with gruesome visual images, the author of the comic sends a message that Islam is a peace religion upholding the principle of no violence.

Subsequently, the choice of wearing sarong and kopiah can be seen as a part of acceptance of local cultures. This comic almost always depicts the main character in the appearance of metal musicians, but in a panel in which he is depicted having undergone *hijrah*, he appears to wear sarong and have kopiah on his head. These changes in fashion should be taken into consideration because fashion is also a means of communication. Ones tend to create a particular image through clothes they choose.

The message of religious moderation is also communicated in the comic “Black Metal Istiqomah” through depicting the main character being deep in thought that *I forget the existence of God who rules the world. I have long contradicted His teaching. I must learn it again.* This thought is supported by the visual images of the book *Iqro* and the novel *1Q84* by Haruki Murakami. These two images look to contradict to each other, but such contrast in fact creates balance. On one hand, the main character is trying to be a good adherent of a religion, which is symbolized by his reading the book *Iqro*; on the other hand, he is still addicted to worldly pleasure, which is symbolized by his reading a novel, which is not forbidden in Islam). The same pattern emerges when the main character is depicted listening to the Qur’an through MP3, while he also listens to music.

The author of this comic might have chosen to write a story about a musician who is trying to undergo *hijrah* by totally abandoning worldly things. However, as a matter of fact, the author chose to present a character that is only human in nature. Despite his decision to undergo *hijrah*, he still listens to music and reads novels amidst his desire to learn religious teachings and to be a better individual. The author’s choice of characterization represents moderate views.

The values of religious moderation demonstrated in those three comic books can be summarized in the following table.

No	Narration	Sources	Indicators of Religious Moderation
1.	<p>On an afternoon, Munzir, a <i>tabfiz</i> student, stopped a bus. Ia wanted to leave for the grand mosque in the capital city.</p> <p>The bus that he stopped was being driven by a non-Muslim young man.</p> <p>A conversation occurred when the Muslim passenger was about to reach his stop.</p> <p>Non-Muslim Youngster: Take care of yourself.</p> <p>Muslim Youngster: yes, I will. Thanks.</p> <p>Before getting off the bus, the Muslim youngster returned the change.</p> <p>Muslim Youngster: Pardon. It's your change. You gave me IDR 1000 more than expected.</p> <p>Non-Muslim Youngster: You have opened my eyes that Islam values honesty.</p>	<p>The comic <i>Hijrah; Saatnya Berubah</i></p>	<p>Tolerance</p>
2.	<p><i>This sarong is under the brand of gajah salto. I intentionally choose the black one in order that it still brings the darkness image to mind. I choose to slip on the slipper Swallow by brand, so that I will not feel a great loss in case that I have to lose it. I am wearing baju koko like the one Ustadz Uje used to wear so that I look cool and trendy. I bring with me a simple, artless prayer mat so that I can establish prayers solemnly. The kopiah I have on my head is the one passed from my forefathers.</i></p>	<p>The comic <i>Black Metal Istiqomah</i></p>	<p>Acceptance of and respect for local cultures, anti-violence</p>

Have a smile on your face and do not look gloomy because Islam is a religion of peace.

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| 3. | <i>When children play and let out noise in mosques, you scare them in such a way that they feel frightened to go there. You should have let them be. If kept that way, mosques will be the place they always miss in the future.</i> | The comic series <i>iQomic</i> volume 2 | Tolerance |
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Conclusion

This research came to a conclusion that the stories in the three comic books on, namely *Black Metal Istiqomah* by Achmad Deptian (Salam Books, 2018), *Hijrah; Saatnya Berubah* by Dzulhilman Roslan and Megat Mohd Faris (Salsabila, 2020) and *iQomic volume 2: Hijrah* in an anthology compiled by 14 comic-book writers (Salsabila, 2019), which were analyzed in this research, present the representation of the values of religious moderation. Those values were recognized by some indicators including anti-violence, tolerance, and acceptance of and respect for local cultures. The indicators were provided in the narration (dialogues and plots) and visual images displayed in the comics.

Comic books should be taken into consideration on account of the fact that they can become effective media for da'wa and processes of instilling religious values. Even some ideologies can be spread and exchanged through comic books. Moreover, comics can be used to campaign for religious moderation so that the campaign does not reach the saturation point and religious moderation can be widely welcomed.

The accelerated development of media makes it possible for future, more in-depth research on religious moderation to be conducted more properly, as is research on da'wa, especially da'wa aimed at young generations as did some dais taking advantage of comics and other popular media. Such good chance should be adopted as a standpoint for future researchers working on this topic.

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