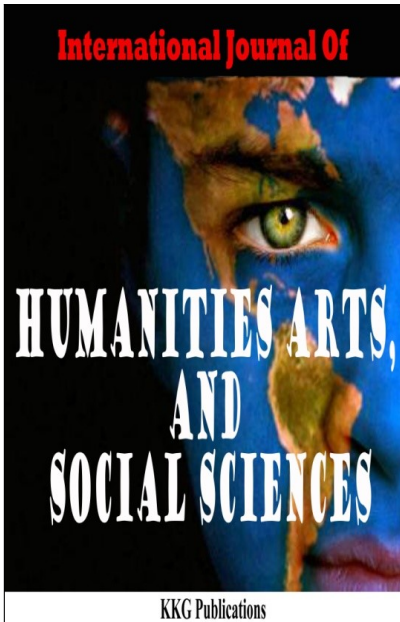


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Comic as a Medium for Da'wah in Indonesia

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COMIC AS A MEDIUM FOR DA'WAH IN INDONESIA

ADITYA RAHMAN YANI ^{1*}, SYIFA SYARIFAH ALAMIYAH ²^{1,2} Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur, Surabaya, Indonesia**Keywords:**Comic
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Abstract. Islam does not restrict the use of various media to achieve the success of da'wah. Any medium may be used if it is considered effective as long as the da'wah is carried out with the correct method and does not contradict with Islamic faith and law. One of the effective media to da'wah in this contemporary era is comic. It has the ability to deliver the message in a way that is easier to be accepted and understood because the language of picture used in comic is easier to be understood than written and spoken language. The emergence of comic as the medium of da'wah begins at around 2000. At that time, Islamic comic appeared in line with the growth of Islamic da'wah among youth, which was based in campuses and schools. The interesting things that will be discussed in this study are: First, the history and development of Islamic comic in Indonesia. Second, factors behind the emergence of the comic that will be discussed from the comic artists' point of view, which is considered different from the mainstream comic creator. Third, reason behind the selection of comic to deliver da'wah message. The last, attitude and argumentation of the Muslim comic artists towards "ikhtilaf" or pros and cons among Islamic mahzabs about depiction of creature. This study is the first study which discusses about da'wah Islamic comic in Indonesia which stressed on qualitative data collection through in-depth interview with professional Islamic comic artists in Indonesia. Literature review has also been employed as secondary data.

INTRODUCTION

Da'wah is a prominent worship. Allah SWT commanded every Muslim without exception (Amin, 1997). Even Allah SWT describes in Quran that He will make people who do the da'wah as the one with the best saying and deeds.

"and who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness" and says, "Indeed, I am of the Muslims." (Al-Fushshilat: 33) (Quthb, 2002).

It means, there is no one better in speech than people who invite in the way of Allah SWT, do what Allah calls to do and explicitly declares that He is of the surrender. In Islam it is named as da'iilallah.

Ibnu Qayyim in his book, "Miftah Dar As-Sa'adah", the dai who invites in the way of Allah are the khawash khalqillah or the most special, the most noble creatures of Allah with the highest position and value in the sight of Allah (Aziz, 2011). Indeed, every Muslim who brought Islamic identity (either in creed or in shari'a) knows that he is commanded to convey Islam to all the people, so that people could live under peace and security. However, this cannot be achieved if there is no awareness of every Muslim to do the da'wah universally (Ashaari, 2017).

Rasulullah (PBUH) said in a hadith, "Convey from me, even if it is one verse." (Shahih Bukhari). The hadith shows that da'wah is an obligation and responsibility of every Muslim. All of the Muslims have to participate in this activity.

Islam does not restrict the use of various media to achieve the success of da'wah. Any medium may be used if it is considered effective to communicate with certain segment of the da'wah target as long as the da'wah is carried out with the correct method and does not contradict with Islamic faith and law. In the selection of which media is appropriate for a target segment, it is important to consider the characteristics of the target audience. Since one type of media is not necessarily effective for all segments.

The medium of da'wah continues to evolve within the times. This requires the dai to think creatively in presenting his messages to make them more attractive. It was as a form of human adaptation to the phenomenon and socio-political conditions emerging in the midst of the community, to achieve the purpose of communication or da'wah itself (Slamet, 2013).

One of the effective media to da'wah in this contemporary era is comic. Kusrianto (2007) stated that comic could make the message easier to be accepted and understood because the language of picture is easier to be understood than written and spoken language.

Comic is also one of the very popular art visuals amongst youth and children in Indonesia. According to coverage from NTV Sekai Banzuke in Tokyo on November 29, 2013, Indonesia has the second largest number of Japanese comic readers in the world with an average of one person reading three books. It is positioned right after Finland which has the largest number

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of readers with an average of one person reading four books. Meanwhile, Japan itself has sixteenth largest number of readers with an average of one person reading one and a half books. In addition, the number of comics sold in 2013 has increased ten times compared to ten years before in 2003 (jogja.tribun-news.com, 2013).

The emergence of comic as the medium of da'wah began at around 2000. At that time, Islamic comic appeared in line with the growth of Islamic da'wah among youth, which was based in campuses and schools.

The interesting things, which will be discussed in this study, are: First, about the history and development of Islamic comic in Indonesia. Second, factors behind the emergence of the comic, discussed from the comic point of view, which differs from the mainstream comic.

Third, strategic reason behind the selection of comic as a medium to deliver message on da'wah. Fourth, the attitude and argumentation of the Muslim comic artists towards ikhtilaf or pros and cons among Islamic mahzabs about depiction of creature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

McCloud (2001) defines Comic as pictures or symbols arranged side by side in a sequence in order to deliver information.

The term Comic derives from the origin word comic (funny), as seen from its shape, which is only one line or one panel (comic strip). This term has already been existing in English since 1884. It is found on weekend special page called "the funnies", as part of caricature, with its humor aimed at mocking policy of figures. When recorded (since 1934, through Famous Funnies) and sold separately, it is then named as comic book. In Indonesia, comic book is usually called as comic.

Later on the artists produced comic books as an independent piece, not as a rubric or supplement on newspaper or magazine (Ajidarma, 2011).

The word "Da'wah" etymologically means "to call" (an-nida), "to persuade" (ad-du'ailasyai'i), "an effort in form of speech or action to attract people for any ism". While "Islamic da'wah" or also named as "da'wah ilallah" is an attempt to bring people through words and deeds to Islam, apply their manhaj, aqidah and implement shari'a (Aziz, 2011).

Thus, Islamic da'wah comic means a creation of visual art, which consists of pictures or symbols arranged side by side in a sequence to deliver calls to people to come to Islam and to invite them to apply their manhaj, aqidah and shari'a.

METHODOLOGY

This study is the first study which discusses about da'wah

Islamic comic in Indonesia which stressed on qualitative data collection through in-depth interview with professional Islamic comic artists in Indonesia. Literature review has also been employed as secondary data. Interview recorded from seven Muslim comic creators in Indonesia will be analyzed in line with the four themes in this study. The seven creators are Veby (author of "33 PesanNabi/ 33 Prophet Messages"), Yunanto (author of "100 Kebiasaan Nabi/ 100 Prophet's Habits" and "Islam Hardcore"), Taufiq Yu (author of "1001 Jagoan/ 1001 Heroes"), Ari (author of "Komik Haji Jayus/ Hajj Jayus Comic"), Oryza Sativa (author of "Hijabocomic"), Seto Buje (author of "Budje" and "Si Bedil") and the last is Syaifurriza (author of "40 Hadist Nabi/ 40 Prophet Hadith").

RESULTS

Development of Islamic Da'wah Comic in Indonesia

Initially comic appeared in Indonesia in the form of comic strips, which were published continuously in print media. At that time, the first comic that appeared was Put On by Kho Wan Gie in 1931, followed by other comic strips such as Mentjari Poetri Hidjaoe by Nasroen A.S. published on weekly media, Ratoe Timur in 1939 (Ajidarma, 2011).

In 1972, there was a research about Indonesian comic titled "Les Bandes Dessinees Indonesiennes" which was known as dissertation written by Marcel Bonnef. It had been tested in France, then published in French language in 1976 and in bahasa Indonesia in 1998 titled "Komik Indonesia".

In 1979-1980, Arswendo Atmowiloto wrote a series of articles, "Komik itu Baik" (Comic is Good) on "Fokus Kita", a rubric on national newspaper, Kompas. After that article, from 1980 to 1990, there was no study, discussion or journalistic report that academically discussed about comic in Indonesia.

The first Islamic theme comic appeared in early 2000 published by publisher specialized in Islamic books. For example "Bidadari Besi" (Iron Angel) published by Syaamil Komik and the other comic published by MQ Publishing. Generally those da'wah comics discussed about the history of Islam and Islamic education for children and youth.

In 2002, comic "Karung Mutiara Al-Ghazali" was born from a comic artist named Hermawan. The comic was published by Gramedia. The story tells about the wisdom of worship, life, pray, sin, love, death and fortune that is adopted from the teaching of Imam Al-Ghazali.

Islamic comic for children (especially for elementary and junior high school children) appeared around 2003, which was published by ARGA publishing, a publisher owned by ESQ (Emotional Spiritual Quotient), a training foundation. It was printed as a supplement for alumni of the training. Some of

the titles are “Rindu Allah” (Missing Allah), “Akulah Sang Pemenang” (I am the Winner), and “ESQ Comic for Kids”. Those comics were generally not distributed on bookshops, but only sold on ESQ Events. In the same year, comic “1001 jagoan”, which is the parody of the 1001 Night legend, by Taufiq Yu was published by Terrant books.

Year 2004 to 2008 are the decreasing years of Islamic da'wah comic productivity in Indonesia. The decreasing numbers of those comic sales and competition with other genre comics could be the reason of the decline of the productivity.

The rise of Islamic da'wah comic in Indonesia began to rocket in 2009 until this year (2014) which is triggered by the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter- and is increased more by the development of smartphone that facilitates applications of new social media such as Instagram, Path, Tumblr and many others. Those developments have driven Islamic comic creator to produce more comics and independently publish through their social media account. There is no need to wait to publish a comic book to gain response and support from readers. Meanwhile, some creators prefer to publish their comics in book format and promote their comics on their social media account.

The emergence of Islamic da'wah comic began with comic “Aku Berfacebook Maka Aku Ada” (I am facebooking then I exist) in 2009, which was independently published by the writer Veby Surya Wibawa (Vbi_Djenggoten). The comic has remarkable response that finally it has been re-published by Gradien Meditama. Not long after that, in 2010, Veby collaborated with his wife, Mira Rahman, to write “Married with Brondong”. After that, his comic has inspired another young da'wah comic in Indonesia.

Tony Trax, a comicus, created da'wah comic titled “Real Masjid” (Real Mosque), which is a satire from name of a popular football team in Spain, Real Madrid. The Comic describes common events that often happen in Mosque using satire and humor approach. In the same year, Veby released “33 Pesan Nabi” (33 Prophet Messages) vol. 1 that was followed by volumes 2 and 3 in the next years. Meanwhile “Real Masjid 2” was released in 2012 and the third edition released in the next year. The first da'wah comic that discussed about Islamic economy “Ekonomi Kita-kita” (our economy) was released in 2013. Muhaimin Iqbal created the comic with Gerai Dinar team and published by Pro-U-Media publisher. Based on the topic and language used in the comic, it describes that the target audience was Muslim lay people about Islamic economy with higher level of education.

The years of 2013 and 2014 are the years of Islamic da'wah comic proliferation in social media. Da'wah comics which

were released periodically through social media account (especially Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) were “Lingkar Komik”, “Komik Haji Jayus”, “Love Bajigur”, “Si Utuy”, “Komik Budje” (which actually had been released in 2011 titled: Budje & Mjuz), then in 2014, “Si Bedil”, “Komik Kaka” and “Nyinyir Melambai”. Another comicus preferred to independently publish comics such as “Islam Hardcore”, “Ilalang”, and “PUKIS (Pendidikan Uasyik Lewat Komik Islam)”.

At this time, “Lingkar Komik”, is one of the most productive da'wah comic strips. The comic tells about daily activity of school da'wah activist. It also has humorous approach. In two years, “Lingkar Komik” Facebook fan page reached more than 25,000 followers. It was the highest number among other comic fan page Facebook accounts.

“Komik Haji Jayus” followed with 19,000 followers while “33 Pesan Nabi” followed with around 16,000 followers. “Lingkar Komik” has ever reached remarkable shares number, when they published comic which attacked government policy to give free condom on National Condom Week in 2013, which is considered as a form of government support on free sex practice in Indonesia. It was shared 1,300 times.

“Komik Haji Jayus” which was also born in 2013, was a piece that was inspired by former popular Muslim comicus, such as Veby Surya Wibawa or Vbi Djenggoten. France da'wah comic “The Muslim Show” which was popular in around 2011 also inspires him. The main theme of the comic was daily events and activities of Muslims.

Year 2013 to 2014 is the peak of the development of da'wah strip comic in social media. However it does not make the growth of printed da'wah comic decrease. JS-Comic community, Lembaga Dakwah Kampus Universitas Gajah Mada Yogyakarta (campus da'wah association), released “PUKIS” in printed form and sold in exhibition for IDR.15,000 each. Another example, mini magazine “INSPIRE Magz” released comic “Love Bajigur” with main topic about youth life, Miladya Rahmawati from Nyol-nyol Comics released “Bolehkah Aku Jatuh Cinta?”, Zahira publisher, who had success in releasing “33 Pesan Nabi”, “Hikmah Membawa Berkah” by Aldy Akbar and “Pengen Jadi Baik” by SQU.

The Motive of Islamic Da'wah Comic

Qualitative data resulted from in-depth interview with Indonesian Islamic comic artist revealed several motives underlying the emergence of da'wah comic, as follows:

- Islamic dawah comic emerges with the purpose to clean the image of Islam.
“I feel that living as a Muslim is getting tougher. We are the majority in number, but the minority in image. So

da'wah feels like a hard way. We need to change the way people look into Islam, begin with small thing, with any way that we could do. Since the thing that I can do is making comic, so this is the thing that I could do."Ari, Haji Jayus comic maker.

- Islamic dawah comic is a visual art piece that is born from social concern.

"My expectation from comic is that it could diffuse (the message on comic) into another thing that is bigger and has real social function. One that I ever try to develop is involving my comic readers in a social action, for example help to build a mushola and help the needsAri", Haji Jayus comic maker.

- Islamic dawah comic emerges as a form of concern towards Muslims who have moved away from their religion. "Indonesia is told as a country with Muslims as a majority. Muslim people are told to have Qur'an and hadith as their source of law. But what I feel, including me myself in past time, our source of solution was not those two things. People prefer motivation book instead to solve their dilemma. People know more about the theory of Adam Smith, Keynes, Marx and their followers. Those theories are still theory, which is incredibly not certain. When comes to a source of law which is surely valid, fix, people just discredit it. In popular saying, only santri (people who intensively learn Islam in Pesantren) and kyai (ulama) are enough to know the source. In short, I tried to make hadith become more popular, earthy, in an applicative, people daily activities. Al-Quran and Hadith is not something that is far away, high in sky. Both sources of law should be near. Applied realistically so the complex problem in society could be cured. InshaAllah."Veby Surya Wibawa, creator of 33 Pesan Nabi.
- Da'wah comic is the supporting media of Islam community or Islamic organization
"I make comic to 'cheer' the da'wah by 'Moslem of Design' (a muslim artist community in a university in Indonesia). The comic is published through our community social media account and inserted in zine that is also produced by our community."Iqbal, writer of "Si Moden" in Ilalang zine.

The Selection of Comic as Medium Of Da'wah

The comic artist considers that comics have many benefits compared with other da'wah medium, such as:

- Comic as a medium could ease the delivery of da'wah message
"I see that comic is an effective means to communicate.

In this case, is to tell the muslimah about hijab. Story in visual form could make the message of da'wah easy to deliver. Da'wah through comic is easier to be accepted because its language is easier to be understood." Oryza Sativa, one of Hijabographic community initiators and creator of "Hijabocomic".

"Comic has the ability to make difficult topic become lighter. So people are interested to read. By reading the comic, they have knowledge, even though only the surface." Seto Buje, creator of "Si Bedil".

"Comic is something light and eye-catching. Generally people are lazy to read long writing, but if the message is made in form of illustration or comic, they must be having different response." Ari, creator of Haji Jayus.

"The advantage of comic in my opinion is ability to make the message become easier to be understood by the readers through the visualization of picture in comic." Syaifurriza, creator of "Kaka" and comic researcher.

"Da'wah using pop visual media (comic), in my opinion, is more effective to deliver the message of wisdom to young audience or those who have young spirit, even for all ages included." Taufiq Yu, creator of "1001 Jagoan". This data finding supports previous research by Nuris and Yani (2014) that the use of comic could facilitate the delivery of da'wah message among young generation. As comic facilitates new and creative wayon delivering religious message.

- Comic as form of self-actualization
"...what I have is drawing skill. If I have skill in speaking, maybe I will choose to speak...maybe" Veby Surya Wibawa, creator of 33 Pesan Nabi. "Because, personally I like drawing and writing, I got these activities in comic making process." Iqbal, creator of "Si Moden" in Ilalang zine. "... I am weak in terms of delivering message verbally. I have ever been a teacher for a while, but then I quit because I feel I cannot be a teacher. It also happens if I do da'wah through writing; I feel that I have no passion. While in comic, I feel comfortable to tell story. Maybe that is the factor that finally makes me choose this medium." Yunanto, creator of "Islam Hardcore". "...choose comic because I am not good in public speaking, actually sometimes I can't stand to speak about Islam even though my knowledge is not deep)." Syaifurriza, creator of "Kaka" and comic researcher.

The Pros and Cons in Islam towards the Prohibition of Drawing Creatures

In Islam, every artwork including comic is a product of worship (devotion to Allah) and also contains and reveals beautiful aes-

thetics (Yani, 2012). Aesthetics could only be realized through deep contemplation towards artistic creation, which will guide the contemplator to an intuition of fundamental truth that Allah and also the creatures as something that could not be described and could not be told.

In Islamic scientific tradition, there is a dissent among ulama about the restriction of drawing creatures. Some forbid absolutely without any possibility to allow drawing the creatures. Meanwhile, some of ulama legalize the use of pictures. This tends to put aside the Islamic rules that are clearly valid.

Some of the Ulama who take "in the middle" position are Syaikh Yusuf Al-Qardhawy and Syaikh Utsaimin. Both of them did not forbid absolutely, however they still have limitation for some rules that could not be broken.

Syaikh Yusuf Al-Qardhawy stressed on the objective of the drawing. If the aim of drawing is for haraam things then it is also haraam. Yet if it is used for good deeds then it is permitted. In his fatwa on his book "Halal-Haram in Islam", he noted that the law of pictures and art painting which is painted on sheets such as paper, clothes, curtain, wall, floor, money and other, is not obvious, except it is known what is the purpose of the picture, where it is located, how it is made, and what the painter's objective is (Qaradhawy, 2007).

He also put limitation that art painting that is forbidden is a painting or picture of sacred people in religious context or was given the attributes in the mundane life, such as:

- Pictures of the prophets, angels and righteous people as prophet Ibrahim, Ishaq, Maryam and others.
- Pictures of King, leader, artist, etc. To produce pictures of these people is considered to have lesser sin. In addition, the sin is heavier when it comes to pictures of kafir, zhalim or fasiq (Qaradhawy, 2007).

Once Syaikh Muhammad bin Shaalih Al-'Utsaimiin was asked about pictures of creatures. Then he included the question's answer into manuscript of his fatwa collection. Some part of the question's answer is as follows:

Question: "Recently some Islamic studio has produced animation movie (cartoon). It's an Islamic movie - that is for example their production entitled *The conquest of Constantinople* or *Journey to Salvation*. And the last, *AnakNajraan* that is mentioned in surat Al-Buruuj or in hadith in Shahihi Muslim. They made this animation to replace bad animation movies. What is the law of that matter yaa Syaikh?"

Answered by Asy-Syaikh Muhammad bin Shaalih Al-'Utsaimiin rahimahullah: "I have an opinion that it is does not matter, insha Allah, because in fact as you mentioned before it is to protect children from something that is haraam. At least, if

it has to be done, then it is lighter than what they usually call cartoon movie - as we heard - which consists of hesitation in the matter of 'aqidah and the role of - wal-'iyaadzubillah Rabb 'azza wa jalla when rain is pouring, and something in line with it. Then generally, I have an opinion that it doesn't matter. That is my opinion if in that animation movie there is nothing except virtue. It doesn't matter, insha Allah. But if it contains music, then it is forbidden, because music includes ma'aazif that is haram" (Utsaimin, n. d).

He explained that using pictures of creatures for da'wah purpose, that is, to protect other people from something that is haraam, is allowed. As long as what is drawn on the medium in this context of research is comic- there is nothing except good virtues.

This study did not focus on the Islamic law about pictures of creatures, yet it has tried to reveal comic artists' opinions towards discourse on Islamic law on pictures of creatures. This study is interested more in seeing the position of comic creator towards several disagreements of the law.

Some statements of the Muslim comic artists towards the disagreement on Islamic law on pictures of creatures are as follows:

- Depends on the intention
"Bismillah, may Allah keep me away from trying to justify for what I did. Like the war, comic is a weapon. I use it as means of Ghazwul Fikr. not to emulate the creation of Allah. As asbabun nuzul of the hadith about the restriction of creating something similar to creatures. Wallahua'lam. This question has been made to us, Muslim artists, the butt of joke. As far, the opinion of syaikh Yusuf Qardhawi is a little bit 'calming' even though it doesn't necessarily stop here. I keep on searching for reference, and keep processing (learning), and looking for drawing technique that is not forbidden in Islam, Insha Allah." Ari, Komik Haji Jayus.
- It is allowed, but never violate the limitations.
"Yes, a lot of people are against it, including my close friend who often attends Islamic salaf studies, he usually reminds me. I stressed on the limitation on how the drawing could be possible to be allowed, what it looks like." - Yunanto, creator of "Islam Hardcore". "I personally don't know, there is khilafiyah amongst ulama related to this matter. I used several references from

ulama. I conclude that, from those who allow it, the pictures that are forbidden are: 1. To be worshipped, 2. To be sacred, for example picture of prophet or pious person, 3. Lust appealing. While if it is aimed for educa-

tion, it is allowed. This refers to the story of Rasulullah who allowed Aisyah to play with her doll.”- Veby Surya Wibawa, creator of 33 Pesan Nabi.

- Choose to avoid unproductive debate
“Please if you do not agree. At this time, I choose not to make any argument. Because, it is not productive at all. Please ask the ulama. The opinion of Asy-Syaikh Muhammad bin Shaalih Al-Utsaimiin rahimahullah, is one of my references. The point is that it is allowed as long as the pictures could be an alternative of cartoon pictures that are everywhere recently, in which the content is not certainly in line with Islam. Ustadz Ahmad Sarwat from Rumah Fiqih also argues that it is allowed, as long as it is for education purposes.” Seto Buje, creator of “Si Bedil”.
- The urgency of da’wah makes it “permitted”
“I take the opinion of Syaikh Yusuf Al-Qardhawi who allows the pictures of creatures but not to be purified, sacred, or compete with the creation of Allah. Islamic comic itself is made with the purpose of da’wah in comic area, which is an urgent matter. Wallahualam bi sawab.” Oryza Sativa, one of Hijabographic initiators and creator of “Hijabocomic”.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the study of Islamic da’wah comic, it comes to the conclusion that:

- Year by year Islamic da’wah comic is significantly being developed in the context of quantity, quality and the penetration area. One of the trigger factors for the development is the increasing access of the comic artists to publish their work independently, both in form of print media and in social media. This growth is in line with the development of information and communication technology in this case gadget and internet and also the

development of print media technology.

- The increase of comic expansion and interest towards Islamic da’wah comic until today show the bright future of this kind of comic in Indonesia.
- Underlying motives behind the emergence of Islamic da’wah comic in Indonesia do not come from commercial factors, but instead another factor that is related with responsibility as a Muslim and social concern reason. It differs from the emergence factor of non-da’wah comics, which are related to entertainment as stated by Marcel Danesi (Danesi, 2010).
- Comic is considered as an effective medium to deliver Islamic da’wah message to particular da’wah segment (especially youth) and also as visual artwork for self-actualization.
- The Islamic da’wah comic creators took “in the middle” position between the pro and contra about the law of drawing creatures in Islam. They took the opinion of ulama who allow the creatures drawing yet put some limitations that are not allowed to be broken. It should also focus on the intention to do good deeds (especially da’wah) and choose not to participate in the debate.

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