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# THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF MOSQUE CLERIC OF CHINESE DESCENT IN SPREADING ISLAM AT CIREBON'S LAUTZE MOSQUE ENVIRONMENT TOWARD ETHNIC CHINESE

Oleh:

Muhammad Yusuf<sup>1</sup>
Rafyon Sani<sup>2</sup>
Syakina<sup>3</sup>
Jerry Heikal<sup>4</sup>

#### Universitas Bakrie

Address: Street. H. R. Rasuna Said No.2 kav c-22, RT.2/RW.5, Karet, Kecamatan Setiabudi, Kuningan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta, Indonesia (12940).

Corresponding Author: syakinac@gmail.com

Abstract. Cirebon's Lautze 3 Mosque, standing firmly in the middle of Cirebon's Chinatown, West Java, is a silent witness to the inspiring story of Islamic preaching among ethnic Chinese. Founded in 2022, this mosque has become a spiritual oasis for the Chinese Muslim community in the area, led by mosque administrators who have a unique background: ethnic Chinese converts. Their story is clear proof that Islamic preaching has no limits. Their experience as converts allowed them to bridge cultural gaps and build trust with non-Muslim Chinese communities. This da'wah approach that is sensitive to culture and community needs is the key to their success in spreading Islam in Cirebon's Chinatown environment. More than just a place of worship, the Lautze 3 Cirebon Mosque has become a community and missionary center for Chinese Muslims in Cirebon. His presence is a symbol of tolerance and unity amidst cultural and ethnic diversity. The inspiring story of the mosque administrators is a reminder for all of us that Islamic da'wah must be carried out with love, understanding and respect for local culture and traditions. Mosque administrators can be more effective in developing

da'wah strategies that benefit both parties, as well as building harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships between the Muslim and Chinese communities in Chinatown.

Keywords: Mosque, Lautze, Converts, Chinatown, Chinese, Role, Culture.

### INTRODUCTION

The propagation of Islam among ethnic Chinese in Indonesia has a long and colorful history, closely intertwined with the journey of the nation and civilization of the archipelago. Traces of it can be found in various historical literature, cultural relics and traditions that are still preserved today. History records that the arrival of Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from the role of Muslim traders from various parts of the world, including China. Since the 7th century AD, Chinese Muslim traders have begun to stop on the coasts of Java and Sumatra, bringing with them the Islamic religion they profess. Their interactions with local residents opened the gates to Islamic propagation in the archipelago.

One of the early evidence of the spread of Islam by ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is the discovery of ancient tombstones citing Arabic calligraphy in Lereng, Central Java, which date from the 14th century AD. The tombstone is proof that Islam has been embraced by the Chinese community in Java for centuries. As trade and diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China develop, Islam is increasingly accepted by the Chinese community in the archipelago. Many of them embraced Islam and then spread it to their communities. Chinese Muslim traders also played an important role in building mosques in various cities in Indonesia, such as the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Palembang and the Ampel Mosque in Surabaya.

The propagation of Islam among ethnic Chinese does not always go smoothly. Differences in culture and traditions sometimes become challenges in spreading Islam. However, with patience, persistence and the right approach, Chinese converts succeeded in attracting the interest of many people to embrace Islam. One example is the story of a Chinese convert named Raden Patah, founder of the Demak Sultanate. He grew up in the Majapahit palace and embraced Islam after meeting a Muslim cleric from Persia. Raden Patah then founded the Demak Sultanate, which became one of the largest Islamic kingdoms in Java.

The role of ethnic Chinese in the spread of Islam in Indonesia is not only limited to trade and building mosques. They also contribute to the fields of education, arts and Islamic culture. Many Chinese converts became scholars, writers and artists who produced valuable works in the Islamic archipelago. One example is Haji Oemar Said Tjong, a Chinese convert who is known as a famous calligrapher in Indonesia. He founded Madrasah Nahwu Sharaf in Surabaya, which became one of the leading centers of Islamic education in the past.

In the modern era, the role of ethnic Chinese in Islamic preaching continues. Many Chinese Muslim organizations and communities are active in spreading Islam and building interfaith dialogue. They also contribute to various social and humanitarian activities, showing that Islam is a religion full of love and brotherhood. The history of the spread of Islam by ethnic Chinese in Indonesia provides valuable lessons for all of us about the importance of tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation between religious communities. Their story is clear proof that Islam can be accepted and practiced by anyone, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background.

### RESEARCH METHODS

Ethnography is one more research model closely related to anthropology, which studies cultural events, which presents the view of life of the subject who becomes the object study. Furthermore, ethnography has been developed into one. Ethnography is a research model that is more closely related to anthropology, which studies cultural events, which presents a view of the life of the subject who is the object of research. Furthermore, ethnography has been developed into a research model in the social sciences that actually uses the philosophical foundation of phenomenology. Ethnography, both as a research report and as a research method, can be considered the basis and origin of anthropology. Ethnography can be seen literally as writing or a report about an ethnic group written by an anthropologist based on the results of field work over a period of months or years. In simple terms, ethnography can be understood as a description of a culture, namely a description of the culture of a society which is the result of a researcher's construction from various information obtained while conducting research in the field and with a focus on certain problems.

Kriyantono (2009) defines ethnographic research as a type of research that does not rely on statistical data. This situation necessitates the use of ethnographic research solely to collect observational data. One data collection technique is to conduct interviews with sources to obtain information directly from them (Gill & Baillie, 2018). Interviews are a data collection technique in the realm of qualitative research. In-depth or intensive interviews are terms used to describe interviews in qualitative research (Osborne & Grantsmith, 2021).

Documentation is another way to collect information besides observation and interviews. Documentation can be public or private records. Examples of public documents include police records, newspaper articles, television transcripts, and similar materials. Memorandums, private letters, telephone conversations, personal diaries, etc. are examples of public documentation. Personal documents include several forms of written records, such as memoranda, personal correspondence, telephone records, and personal diaries. Personal documents include several types of records such as memoranda, personal correspondence, telephone records, and personal diaries. The goal is to obtain information that supports data analysis and interpretation.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This research was conducted by interviewing 2 (two) T resources person with ethnic Chinese culture, he is a mosque administrator with various duties at the Lautze Mosque and his experiences from the beginning of the Lautze Mosque until now are as follows:

Table 1. Interview Result

No.	Question	Question Mr Taufik's answer		
1.	Why are the mosque	Indeed, the vision and	Because they have a deep	
	administrators who	mission of Leutze 3	understanding of Chinese	
	converted to Islam at the	Cirebon is one of recruiting	culture and can bridge	
	Lautze Mosque	converts because their	communication between	
	considered to play an	family background is non-	Islamic teachings and local	
	important role in	Muslim. Once they become		

	spreading Islam in	Muslim converts, hopefully	traditions, so that da'wah
	Chinatown?	their families will also	becomes more effective.
		accept them, mostly	
		because they are confused	
		about where to convert.	
2.	Why is the converting	The vision of Leutze 3	This background gives them
	background of the	Cirebon is primarily a	an advantage in
	mosque administrator	location like this in the	communicating and
	an advantage in the	middle of the shophouses	interacting with the Chinese
	spread of Islam among	and then in the business	community, because they
	ethnic Chinese?	center, we were actually	understand the beliefs,
		here and we weren't here	customs and values held by
		before so we moved around	ethnic Chinese.
		and we also wanted to make	
		waqf but the environment	
		has been Muslim for a long	
		time and that's not our goal	
		. So the Laute 3 Cirebon	
		Mosque generally stands in	
		places like this for	
		communities, especially	
		Chinese Muslims. So most	
		of the management recruits	
		ethnic Chinese converts	
3.	Why can a Muslim	Yes, that means you want to	This understanding allows
	mosque administrator's	show that you are cultured.	mosque administrators to
	understanding of	No, there are no Middle	convey Islamic teachings in a
	Chinese culture help the	Eastern elements, because	way that is respectful and
	propagation of Islam in	Islam probably also had its	relevant to Chinese culture,
	Chinatown?	prophets from China. So	making it more easily
		Chinese Muslims have	accepted by the local
		existed since ancient times	community.
			<u> </u>

		because the prophets must	
		have spread the Islamic	
		religion to China there.	
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4.	Why is the presence of	So our community starts	Their presence as individuals
	mosque administrators	from the Chinese family,	who have undergone the
	who convert to Islam	then our relations such as	process of changing religions
	more effective in	acquaintances, relatives	provides real and inspiring
	building the Chinese	and business partners, also	examples, so that the Chinese
	community's trust in	Chinese ethnic people,	people feel closer and believe
	Islam?	there we can broadcast the	that Islam can be in harmony
		Islamic religion. it's easier	with their lives.
		to get in that way. because	
		for example different tribes	
		it is more difficult to	
		broadcast it but because it is	
		one tribe it is easier to	
		broadcast its Islamic	
		religion.	
5.	Why is the role of	So our community starts	They can explain and adapt
	mosque administrators	from the Chinese family,	Islamic teachings in a way
	who convert to Islam	then our relations such as	that respects and integrates
	considered important in	acquaintances, relatives	Chinese traditions, reducing
	bridging the gap	and business colleagues,	misunderstandings and
	between Islamic	also Chinese ethnic people,	cultural resistance.
	teachings and Chinese	there we can broadcast the	
	traditions?	Islamic religion. It's easier	
		to get in that way. Because,	
		for example, from different	
		ethnic groups, it is more	
		difficult to broadcast it, but	
		because it is one ethnic	
		because it is one enimic	

		group, it is easier to	
		broadcast its Islamic	
		religion. Here, it depends	
		on the tribe. So not all of	
		them use Mandarin, some	
		use Hokkien.	
6.	Are there special	So far, we have held	Yes, mosque administrators
	programs and activities	lectures for Muslim	develop programs such as
	developed by mosque	converts. So it is scheduled,	introductory classes to Islam,
	administrators who	in addition to daily	interfaith dialogue, and social
	convert to Islam that are	religious activities such as	activities specifically
	needed by Chinese	five daily prayers, Friday	designed to address the
	converts?	prayers, Eid prayers, Eid al-	spiritual and cultural needs of
		Adha. Then we also held a	Chinese people who have
		hilat event for the 3 Cirebon	recently converted to Islam.
		mosques. there are events	
		or programs scheduled like	
		that.	
7.	Why is the continuity of	We have exchanged ideas	Because they are an effective
	Islamic preaching in	with others about the	link between Islamic
	Chinatown so strongly	Islamic religion because we	teachings and the Chinese
	influenced by the active	need to build friendship	community, ensuring that the
	role of mosque	with the environment but	da'wah continues to be
	administrators who	we can never be separated	relevant and well received in
	have converted to	from Chinese descent. We	Chinatown.
	Islam?	are not all converts, there	
		are also people from around	
		us	
L			

8.	Why do mosque	Lautze 3 Mosque in	This collaboration is
	administrators who	Cirebon was only	important for building
	have converted to Islam	established on October 22	harmonious relationships,
	need to collaborate with	2022. In the future it will be	promoting tolerance, and
	the non-Muslim	like that, so we will	strengthening da'wah through
	Chinese community?	continue to maintain	mutually beneficial
		friendship with the	understanding and
		surrounding community,	cooperation.
		whether they are non-	
		Muslim or Muslim because	
		we are in a family like that.	
		there are Confucians,	
		Buddhists, Catholics, there	
		are absolutely no Muslims	
		in the same family and they	
		also keep silahtuhrami	
		going and we want that to	
		happen here too.	
9.	Why is it important for	Yes, some already exist,	Technology can expand the
	mosque administrators	such as social media, but in	reach of da'wah, facilitate
	who convert to Islam to	the future, we still have to	faster and more efficient
	utilize technology in	coordinate with Lautze	communication, and provide a
	their da'wah?	center because we have	platform for wider education
		many branches.	and discussion, especially in
			the current digital era.
10.	Why is measuring the	Oh the progress huh. We	Measuring success with
	success of da'wah	still have people who	specific indicators helps in
	through certain	convert to Islam or convert	evaluating the effectiveness
	indicators important for	to Islam, after that there is	of da'wah programs, ensures
	mosque administrators	training for them about	that the efforts undertaken
	who convert to Islam?	Muslims and what their	produce the expected results
		goals are in the future	but we don't have a goal like

because most of their	we should getting people with
families don't accept that	convert to islam forcefully.
anymore. And we focus	
more on converts so that	
they don't lose their way.	
And there isn't a target like	
that for the time being but	
we don't know what the	
future holds	

From the results of the interview above, the inventor managed to find several important points for this research. This important point comes from the author's observations for research, among other things.

**Table 2. Observations Table Result** 

Question	Mr. Taufik's Answer	Answer from Mr. David
The Important Role of	Recruit converts from	Deep understanding of Chinese
Mosque Management in	ethnic Chinese, a	culture, bridging communication
Chinatown	community starting	between Islam and local
	from Chinese families	traditions
Advantages of Mosque	It is easier to	Understand Chinese beliefs,
Manager Background	broadcast Islam	customs, and values
	because of one tribe	
Understanding Chinese	Interact with ethnic	Convey the teachings of Islam in
Culture Helps Da'wah	Chinese, friendship	a respectful and relevant way to
	with the environment	Chinese culture
The Effectiveness of the	The community starts	Providing a real and inspiring
Presence of Mosque	from Chinese families	example of the integration of
Administrators Who	and relationships	Islam in Chinese life
Convert to Islam		

The Important Role of	Bridging the	Adapting Islamic teachings in a
Mosque Management in	relationship between	way that respects Chinese
Bridging the Gap	Islam and the Chinese	traditions
	community	
Special Programs and	Scheduled lectures for	Islamic introduction classes,
Activities	converts, regular	interfaith dialogue, social
	religious events	activities for the needs of the
		Chinese community who have
		just converted to Islam
The Influence of the	Friendship with the	Effective link between Islamic
Active Role of Mosque	surrounding	teachings and the Chinese
Management in the	community, both non-	community
Continuity of Da'wah	Muslims and Muslims	
Collaboration with the	Build friendship and	Building harmonious, tolerant,
Non-Muslim Chinese	harmonious	and mutually beneficial
Community	relationships	cooperation
Utilization of	Not explicitly	Expanding the reach of da'wah,
Technology in Da'wah	mentioned	efficient communication,
		education and discussion in the
		digital era
Measuring the Success	Maintaining	Measuring success with
of Da'wah	friendship with the	indicators for evaluating the
	surrounding	effectiveness of da'wah programs
	community	

It is therefore the administration of the Lautze 3 Cirebon Mosque that has successfully done the much-needed propagation of Islam in Chinatown. This is by ensuring that as many ethnic Chinese are converted into this religion, starting from the family members to the close relatives. Because they are also converts to Islam, they understand the belief system, traditions and values of ethnic Chinese as it is easy to propagate Islam. It is further through such understanding that they can appropriately, and thus sensitively, share Islamic doctrines for good reception from the local community.

Having mosque administrators who are converts to Islam provides a concrete, inspiring example that creates a sense of closeness for the Chinese, giving them the feeling that Islam can be compatible with their lives. They could understand and adjust Islamic beliefs in a way that will protect Chinese traditions from misunderstandings and cultural resistance. These might include scheduled lectures, recurrent religious activities, and classes introducing Islam and interreligious dialogue. Mosque administrators thus become proficient intermediaries between Islamic teachings and the Chinese community, ensuring the da'wah remains relevant and warmly accepted by all. The forging of alliances with the non-Muslim Chinese community underlines the fostering of harmonious and tolerant relationships. Technology enriches the field of da'wah in that, mainly through communication and education, the digital age greatly increases. Measuring the effectiveness of da'wah by using metrics is important for analyzing the effects from da'wah efforts and ensuring the achievement of intended results.

Data on Islamization (converts) from 2014 – 2023 Lautze Mosque

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Convert	66	88	71	88	103	58	75	60	75	67	751
(people)											

Source: Lautze Mosque

Data on Islamization (converts) for 2024 Lautze Mosque

Month	January	February	March	Total
Convert (people)	3	3	2	8

Source: Lautze Mosque

From the research results, the author found several aspects with respective values and shared values from the findings of researchers in the field.

Table 3 Values and Shared Values.

Aspects	Value	Shared Value

		The Chinese community
	The mosque management	has access to
	recruited converts from	understanding Islam from
<b>Recruitment of Converts</b>	ethnic Chinese to	fellow ethnicities, making
	strengthen the Muslim	the conversion process
	community in Chinatown.	easier and more
		acceptable.
	The mosque administrators	Chinese culture is
	have a deep understanding	respected and considered
Cultural Understanding	of Chinese culture, which	in the da'wah process,
Cultural Oliderstanding	helps in conveying the	creating a more inclusive
	teachings of Islam in a	and harmonious
	relevant way.	environment.
Inspirational Examples	The presence of mosque administrators who have undergone the process of converting to religion provides a real and inspiring example.	The Chinese community feels closer and is confident that Islam can be harmonized with their lives, making it easier to accept the teachings of Islam.
Adaptation of Islamic Teachings	Mosque administrators can explain and adapt Islamic teachings in a way that respects Chinese traditions.	Cultural misunderstandings and resistance are reduced, increasing acceptance and harmony between religions.
Special Programs	The mosque management develops programs such as scheduled lectures, Islamic introductory classes, and interfaith dialogue.	The program meets the spiritual and cultural needs of the Chinese community who have recently

		converted to Islam,
		helping them adapt better.
Friendship and Harmonious Relationship	Mosque administrators build friendships with the surrounding community, both Muslims and non- Muslims.	Harmonious relations and tolerance between religions and communities are maintained, strengthening social harmony.
Utilization of Technology	Utilizing technology to expand the reach of da'wah and facilitate communication and education.	Technology helps disseminate information faster and more efficiently, providing a wider forum for education and discussion in the digital era.
Evaluation of Da'wah Success	Measuring the success of da'wah with certain indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of the program.	A good evaluation ensures that the da'wah program is effective and produces a positive impact, benefiting both parties.

### **Background to the Management of the Mosque Converting to Islam**

The majority of mosque administrators are converts from Chinese ethnicity, so they understand Mandarin culture and language, which makes it easier for them to communicate and build trust with the non-Muslim Chinese community. Their experience as converts helps them understand the challenges and needs of other Chinese converts, so they can provide appropriate support and guidance.

### **Understanding Chinese Culture**

The mosque management understands Chinese culture and integrates it into the mosque design, such as the use of Chinese ornaments, lanterns and calligraphy. This shows that Islam can be practiced in the context of Chinese culture, making it attractive

to ethnic Chinese. Their knowledge of Chinese culture helps them adapt their preaching approach in a way that is more easily accepted by the Chinese community.

### **Chinese Community Beliefs**

The presence of mosque administrators who are ethnic Chinese converts builds the Chinese community's trust in Islam. They saw that Islam could be accepted and practiced by people of their own ethnicity. The mosque administrators' experience as converts to Islam allows them to better understand the doubts and questions the Chinese community has about Islam, so they can provide satisfactory answers.

### **Special Programs and Activities**

Cirebon's Lautze 3 Mosque holds special programs and activities designed for Chinese converts, such as recitations in Mandarin or Hokkien. This helps them learn Islam more easily and feel more accepted as converts. These activities also help build community among Chinese converts, so that they can support and encourage each other on their spiritual journey.

### **Collaboration with Non-Muslim Chinese Communities**

Lautze 3 Cirebon Mosque collaborates with the non-Muslim Chinese community to hold joint events and build good relations. This helps bridge the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the Chinatown neighborhood. This collaboration also shows that Islam is open to dialogue and collaboration with other communities, thereby improving the image of Islam in the eyes of the Chinese community.

### Measuring the Success of Da'wah

Mosque administrators measure the success of their da'wah through indicators such as the number of new converts, participation in mosque activities, and feedback from the community. This helps them to monitor the effectiveness of their program and make necessary adjustments. This measurement also helps them to show supporters and donors that their preaching has a positive impact and is worthy of continued support.

### **CONCLUSION**

The mosque management at the Lautze 3 Cirebon Mosque has a deep commitment to spreading Islam among the ethnic Chinese community in the area around Chinatown.

Their shared values are evident in their preaching approach, which emphasizes cultural sensitivity, community involvement, and mutual understanding. They recognize the importance of bridging the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim communities and strive to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone. Their dedication to interfaith dialogue and cooperation is evidence of their commitment to promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

In addition to these shared values, mosque administrators also show a strong sense of empathy and compassion for the unique challenges faced by converts from the ethnic Chinese community. They understand the cultural and family pressures these individuals may face and provide them with the support and guidance necessary to navigate their spiritual journey. Their unwavering commitment to the well-being and spiritual growth of the Muslim community is the cornerstone of their missionary efforts. Overall, the mosque administrators at the Lautze 3 Cirebon Mosque embody shared values, namely cultural sensitivity, community involvement, interfaith dialogue and empathy, thus making them role models in efforts to spread Islam in a harmonious and respectful manner.

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