

## Local Wisdom-Based Da'wah Rhetoric: Analysis of *Guru's* Communication Styles in South Kalimantan

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### Abstract

Although previous studies have examined rhetorical strategies in *da'wah* (Islamic preaching), limited attention has been given to how these strategies adapt to specific local cultures. This study addresses that gap by exploring how Islamic preachers (*Guru*) in South Kalimantan incorporate Banjar cultural values into their rhetorical practices to enhance message relevance and audience engagement. The study aims to identify the dominant rhetorical styles used, explain how they draw from local wisdom, and assess their communicative impact. A qualitative-descriptive method within the ethnography of communication framework was employed. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews with preachers and congregants, and sermon documentation. Thematic coding and interpretive analysis were used to link rhetorical patterns with Banjar cultural elements. Findings reveal three dominant rhetorical styles: (1) persuasive-narrative, utilizing local folklore such as *Hikayat Datu Kalampayan*; (2) religious humor, incorporating Banjar comedic expressions to build rapport; and (3) symbolic-cultural references, invoking values like *baimbai* (cooperation) and *adat basambangan* (etiquette in interaction). These strategies reduce social distance, strengthen emotional connection, and improve audience receptivity. The study contributes theoretically by highlighting the cultural embedding of rhetorical forms in localized *da'wah*. Practically, it offers a model for preachers to contextualize messages effectively. It also suggests integrating cultural adaptation training into preacher development programs.

### Keywords

Banjar culture, communication style, *da'wah* rhetoric, and local wisdom

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic preaching or *da'wah* is a communication process that not only functions to convey normative teachings, but also requires a contextual delivery strategy so that religious messages can be fully accepted and relevant by the community (E-sor et al., 2025). In a multicultural society like Indonesia, the success of *da'wah* is greatly influenced by the *da'i's* ability to adapt messages to the local cultural context (Cutri et al., 2021; Nasution & Salam, 2024). Conversely, a rigid *da'wah* approach that solely adheres to the text, without considering local values, often fails to reach the community's hearts so that religious messages lose their social meaning. Various studies confirm that integrating local wisdom into *da'wah* rhetoric is one of the important factors in increasing the effectiveness of religious communication (Agung et al., 2024; Isfironi, 2025; Chandrasari et al., 2025).



Kalimantan, with its diversity of traditions including language, art, music and spiritual beliefs (Anwar et al., 2025), In South Kalimantan, the Banjar people use values such as *adat basambangan* (manners of visiting and interacting), *baimbai* culture (togetherness and cooperation), and the Banjar language not only as an identity, but also as a medium of daily communication (Hawkins, 2000; Rafiqoh, 2025). These values influence how people understand religious messages and assess the credibility of preachers. However, practices in the field show differences: some teachers successfully utilize local wisdom as a rhetorical device so that their lectures are communicative, down-to-earth and easily accepted (Sirait, 2024), while others avoid local cultural references for fear of obscuring the substance of the teachings (Karimullah, 2024). His tension raises an important question: to what extent can local wisdom be integrated into the rhetoric of da'wah without compromising the purity of religious teachings?

Previous studies have highlighted various aspects of da'wah rhetoric. Arisa (2025) and Hasanah et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos elements in building the credibility and persuasive power of the preacher. Widyanti & Syah (2025) and Yusuf et al., (2022) showed that local wisdom is an effective source of cultural values to convey moral and religious messages. Rahmah & Aslamiah (2023) even offer a contextual da'wah model sensitive to socio-cultural pluralism. However, studies exploring integrating Banjar local wisdom in da'wah rhetoric in South Kalimantan are still limited. In addition, there are still different views among researchers and da'wah practitioners about the extent to which adaptation to local culture can be done without compromising the substance of religion - especially in the era of social media, where da'wah content is often homogeneous and crosses cultural boundaries (Anwar et al., 2024).

Based on this research gap, this study seeks to analyse in depth how South Kalimantan teachers integrate Banjar cultural elements - namely *basambangan* custom, *baimbai*, and Banjar language - into their rhetorical strategies. It uses the ethnography of communication framework to identify rhetorical patterns, understand the mechanisms of cultural integration, and evaluate its impact on audience engagement and message reception. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify the dominant rhetorical style used by Guru Banjar in integrating local wisdom into da'wah; (2) analyse the suitability and applicability of this strategy to rhetorical communication theory; and (3) evaluate the congregation's perception of the effectiveness of da'wah based on local culture.

The contribution of this research is multiple. Theoretically, this research expands the study of da'wah communication by bridging rhetorical theory and ethnographic approaches and providing a conceptual framework on how religious rhetoric can be contextually bound to a particular culture. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for *da'i* and *da'wah* organizations to design communication strategies that are effective, inclusive, and in accordance with local values, without compromising the substance of Islamic teachings. Thus, da'wah not only functions as a medium for conveying religious teachings but also as a means of socio-cultural transformation rooted in Islamic values and local wisdom.

## 2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a communication ethnography method. This method was chosen because it can reveal how religious messages are conveyed in the context of local culture, particularly how teachers in South Kalimantan integrate Banjar cultural values into their religious rhetoric. According to Ayton, (2023), communication ethnography not only looks at what is said but also how messages are conveyed through symbols, stories, and cultural norms. Field research

was conducted over four months (January–April 2025) in three regions: Banjarmasin, Banjarbaru, and Hulu Sungai Selatan, which were purposively selected to represent geographical variation and preaching styles. Participants included seven teachers and fifteen congregants, selected based on their active involvement in da'wah activities and understanding of Banjar culture. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, meaning interviews were stopped once no new themes emerged.

Data was collected through direct observation of 21 sermon sessions, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, including sermon notes and social media content. Observations covered verbal and nonverbal aspects, such as word choice, argument structure, gestures, and local stories or symbols. Interviews with teachers lasted 60–90 minutes, and with congregants 45–60 minutes. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman in Mezmir (2020), which includes three stages: data reduction through transcription and initial coding with the assistance of NVivo 14; data presentation through thematic grouping such as ethos, pathos, logos, and local values like *baimbai* and *adat basambangan*; and concluding by linking rhetorical patterns with theory and cultural context.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and time (Natow, 2020). Intercoder reliability testing was also conducted on 20% of the data, yielding a Cohen's Kappa of 0.82, indicating high consistency (Husband, 2020). The researcher also engaged in self-reflection due to their cultural background closely aligning with the research subject. This helped in building trust but also required caution regarding potential bias. Ethically, all participants were informed about the research objectives, signed consent forms, and had their identities anonymized. Data was stored securely, and participants were allowed to withdraw at any time.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Da'wah, as understood in the literature, is not just a process of conveying normative Islamic teachings, but a religious communication practice that aims to build understanding, strengthen religious identity, and encourage social transformation (Karimullah, 2024; Isfironi, 2025). Its success is highly dependent on the ability of communicators - in this case, religious teachers - to adapt messages and delivery styles according to audience characteristics, including social aspects, culture, local language, and the development of da'wah media, which now also penetrates digital platforms (Hanum et al., 2023). This concept aligns with the understanding of da'wah rhetoric as the art and technique of persuasion that combines language styles, symbols, and communication strategies so that messages are received effectively and meaningfully (E-sor et al., 2025).

In the context of the Banjar community in South Kalimantan, da'wah serves two functions: conveying religious teachings and strengthening cultural identity. Based on 22 lecture observations and 18 in-depth interviews, this study found three main rhetorical styles used by religious teachers: persuasive-narrative, humorous-religious and symbolic-cultural. They do not stand alone, but complement each other to increase understanding, emotional closeness, and congregational engagement.

#### *Persuasive-Narrative Communication Style*

The persuasive-narrative style is a rhetorical strategy in Islamic preaching that relies on the power of storytelling to convey moral and spiritual messages in a contextual manner, appealing to emotions, and is closely aligned with the real-life experiences of the audience. The results show that the persuasive-narrative style in Banjar da'wah relies on the power of folklore to convey Islamic values

emotionally and contextually. Stories such as the *Hikayat Datu Kalampayan* are used by Guru Ilham Homaidi at Masjid Raya Sabilal Muhtadin, Banjarmasin, to emphasize honesty, patience, and firmness of faith. He states:

*"The story of Datu Kalampayan is not merely a legend, but a reflection of the noble values passed down by our ancestors. By using this story, the congregation finds it easier to understand and internalize the Islamic messages I convey."*



*Majelis Guru Zuhdi in Hulu Sungai Selatan*



*Majelis Guru Ilham*

Observations showed that the congregation was focused, smiling at the humorous parts, and repeating local story terms in the Q&A. Mrs. Siti (56) said:

*"When I hear the story, I feel like I'm experiencing the characters' adventures in the tale. So, it's not just theory, but real in my heart. It makes it easier to practice the teachings conveyed by the Guru."*

Mr. Rahmat, a Banjarbaru farmer, adds:

*"Da'wah that uses local stories like this makes me feel closer to the message of religion. I can see the connection between Islamic teachings and our daily values and culture."*

Guru Zuhdi in Hulu Sungai Selatan often relates his preaching to the legend of Putri Junjung Buih, which teaches loyalty and determination:

*"We must make the message of da'wah easy to understand by using examples that are already embedded in the culture of the Banjar people."*

According to Mr. Anwar, a member of his assembly:

*"The narratives make da'wah feel like a part of daily life, not something foreign."*

This approach effectively opens dialogue between cultures and religions, reduces social resistance, and strengthens acceptance of Islamic messages. The persuasive-narrative style approach used by teachers in Banjar is in line with the narrative paradigm proposed by Fisher, in which humans understand reality and construct meaning in life through stories, not solely through rational arguments (O'Boyle, 2022). From a classical rhetorical perspective, this strategy also aligns with Aristotle's concept of *pathos* (Herrick, 2020; Enos & Lauer, 2020), which emphasizes that effective persuasion must appeal to the emotions of the audience in addition to presenting logic (*logos*) and the credibility of the speaker (*ethos*). On the other hand, the use of folklore as a medium for preaching demonstrates the application of the principle of cross-cultural communication emphasized by Gudykunst in Liu et al., (2023), namely the importance of adapting messages to a symbolic framework that is familiar to the audience. In the

Banjar context, folklore functions as cultural codes (Priandhita, 2020), similar to the findings of Budiyono et al. (2025) on preaching based on local wisdom in Central Java and the research of Ridho & Sa'ad (2025) on the process of religious inculturation.

However, academic debates outside the Banjar context show that this strategy is not entirely accepted without criticism. Some researchers, such as Hasan (2018) in Jakarta and Al-Qarni (2021) in the Middle East, argue that overly particular local narratives have the potential to limit the reach of cross-cultural da'wah, especially when religious messages need to reach audiences with very diverse social backgrounds. Conversely, studies in Malaysia (Abdul Rahman & Hashim, 2020) and West Africa (Sanneh, 2015) have found that contextualizing messages through folklore can facilitate the acceptance of universal Islam, as it presents religious messages in a familiar form rooted in the collective memory of society. A similar trend is also evident in digital da'wah on social media (Norhidayah, 2025), where short video-based narratives have proven effective in building emotional closeness between da'wah practitioners and their audience. This is because spirituality is a soul-related aspect that encourages individuals to achieve faith, foster hope, and find meaning in life (Haliza & Surawan, 2025).

Thus, the persuasive-narrative style in Banjar can be understood not merely as a rhetorical technique but as a practice of inculturation that negotiates universal Islamic messages with local cultural symbols. This approach offers great relevance for strengthening religious identity in the era of globalization, especially in facing the challenges of cultural homogenization. However, its application requires caution so that da'wah remains open to cross-cultural audiences and does not get trapped in cultural isolation that limits the scope of religious messages.

### *Religious Humour Style*

Religious humour style is one of the rhetorical approaches to preaching that utilizes humour as a communication strategy to convey religious messages in a light, communicative, and humanistic manner (Adam, 2020). In the context of the Banjar community in South Kalimantan, humour is not merely entertainment, but part of an oral tradition rich in moral and social values. Teachers utilize local humour – whether in the form of contextual jokes, humorous parables, or subtle satire – to lighten the mood, reduce tension in gatherings, and build emotional closeness with the congregation.



*Majelis Guru Rasyid*



*Majelis Guru Zuhdi*

Observations at several *majelis taklim* (religious gatherings) in Banjarbaru and Hulu Sungai Selatan show that teachers such as Rasyid and Zuhdi systematically incorporate Banjar humour into their sermons and lectures. This humour includes the use of the Banjar language, local idioms, and wordplay that is familiar to the congregation. For example, when discussing the importance of guarding one's tongue, Teacher Rasyid said with a smile, "If our tongue causes trouble, don't blame the rice we eat!"

(Observation, Banjarbaru, 2024). This expression elicits laughter while conveying a clear moral message. From the recipients' perspective, an interview with Hendra (23 years old) revealed:

*"The preacher's humour keeps me from getting bored or feeling scolded. Instead, I feel motivated to attend the religious study session because it feels close and enjoyable."*

A similar view was expressed by Siti (41 years old), who noted that humour makes the lecture feel like a casual conversation, making the message easier to absorb without feeling pressured. From the preacher's perspective, Guru Zuhdi explains:

*"With humour, the message of preaching is not only heard but also felt. The congregation becomes more willing to respond, the atmosphere becomes lively, and two-way communication is created."*

Theoretically, humour in preaching can be explained through relief theory Car (2022), which states that humour serves to release psychological and emotional tension, especially when discussing heavy topics such as sin or repentance. In the Banjar context, humour also aligns with persuasive communication theory (Ford, 2021; Scheel & Zekavat, 2025), which emphasizes that humour can enhance the appeal of a message, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and reduce audience resistance. However, there are limitations: excessive or contextually inappropriate humour risks diminishing the seriousness of the religious message or even causing misunderstandings. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, Fuhse (2021) and Hammerin et al. (2025), local humour becomes a social symbol that affirms the preacher's position as part of the community, not an external figure who lectures.

These findings reinforce the results of studies by Deuman (2019) and Bouma (2021), which show that humour based on local culture not only increases congregational participation but also strengthens memory of the sermon content. However, this symbol also carries the risk of exclusivity—what is funny to insiders may feel foreign or less understood by cross-cultural audiences. Field data analysis reveals three main functions of religious humour among Banjar preachers: first, reducing social distance – humour creates an egalitarian space where congregants feel equal to the preacher. Second, improving message retention – Moral messages are easier to remember when linked to funny anecdotes. Third, maintaining engagement – Laughter breaks boredom, maintains attention, and provides emotional respite without sacrificing substance.

However, interviews with several teachers also touched on challenges, such as differences in humour preferences across generations, the sensitivity of themes that could spark controversy, and the need to ensure that entertainment elements do not obscure the theological core. This requires caution and full awareness from preachers in managing humour as a rhetorical tool in preaching. Thus, the style of religious humour in Banjar preaching is not merely an entertainment insert, but an integrated, contextual, and socially transformative rhetorical strategy. Its success lies in its ability to balance familiarity with respect, so that preaching becomes dialogical, participatory, and rooted in local wisdom.

### ***Symbolic-Cultural Style***

The symbolic-cultural style is a da'wah communication approach that employs local cultural symbols as mediums for conveying religious values, allowing the message to be transmitted not only verbally but also through familiar and meaningful cultural expressions (Eller, 2021; Chang & Chuang, 2021). This method strengthens emotional bonds and social solidarity, demonstrating that Islam can

coexist harmoniously with local traditions. Field observations in South Hulu Sungai Regency show that *Guru* frequently incorporates Banjar cultural symbols into their preaching. The most striking example is the consistent wearing of traditional Banjar clothing, complete with distinctive headgear such as *tanjak* or *kopiah* decorated with regional motifs. This visual identity enhances credibility and reflects harmony between religious and cultural values. As Guru Ilham Homaidi stated:

*“By wearing traditional clothing, I want to show that Islam and Banjar culture are not contradictory, but complement each other. This way, preaching feels like part of our daily lives, not something foreign.”*

This aligns with cultural rhetoric theory (Geertz, 2005; Rofiqoh et al., 2021; Zurvani & Zarei, 2024), which posits that cultural symbols function as persuasive tools because they carry identity and social attachment values. The integration of local terms such as *baimbai*—a Banjar concept denoting solidarity, mutual aid, and cooperation—further bridges Islamic teachings with local traditions. For instance, in a sermon at the Tapin Village Mosque, Guru Ilham explained:

*“Just as baimbai teaches us to help one another, Islam also encourages close brotherhood and strong ukhuwah Islamiyah.”*

Congregants view this positively. Mr. Hasan, an active *majelis taklim* member in Hulu Sungai Selatan, remarked:

*“When the Guru uses language and symbols we know, I feel the da’wah belongs to us and not something foreign. This makes it easier for me to accept and practice Islamic teachings.”*

These responses illustrate the principle of symbolic interactionism, Blumer in Fuhse (2021) and Hammerin et al. (2025), where social meaning is constructed through interactions and symbols used in everyday life. When local symbols are embedded in da’wah, the congregation not only understands the message intellectually but also experiences it emotionally and culturally. Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory (Afisi, 2020) also helps explain this phenomenon. In Peirce’s terms, cultural elements like *baimbai* serve as the *representamen* (symbolic form), referring to Islamic brotherhood (object), whose meaning (*interpretant*) is shaped by the congregation’s lived social context. From the lens of cultural framing, Benford & Snow (2000), the use of local symbols aligns Islamic values with the community’s existing frame of reference, facilitating acceptance and reducing the risk of cultural alienation. This process mirrors the concept of religious inculturation (Ballano, 2020), in which Islamic teachings integrate organically with local traditions without compromising theological integrity. Empirically, the use of traditional music during religious gatherings or incorporating customary rituals into sermons—such as linking mutual assistance to the philosophy of *basandi syarak, basandi sarak* (custom based on sharia)—adds depth to this symbolic-cultural communication. This also aligns with the contextual theology approach (Agung et al., 2024; Setiawan, 2025), which advocates interpreting religious teachings in harmony with local socio-cultural realities.

Supporting this, Rosidin et al., (2022) found that symbolic-cultural preaching enhances congregational trust in the *Guru* as religious leaders who understand local values, while strengthening the sense of belonging to Islamic teachings. This resonates with Koentjaraningrat’s in Fitria & Khoirunnisa (2024) and Rangkuti et al., (2022) concept of cultural symbolism, in which symbols convey values deeply embedded in society’s cultural structure. Thus, the symbolic-cultural style in Banjar da’wah rhetoric demonstrates that success depends not only on message content but also on deep engagement with local symbols and meanings. Rooted in cultural and theological theory, this approach

fosters inclusive, solid, and sustainable religious awareness in communities such as South Kalimantan, while offering a replicable model for other culturally diverse contexts.

**Table 1.** Banjar's Local Culture-Based Da'wah Communication Style

Communication Style	Qualitative Data (Interviews & Observations)	Quantitative Data (Survey, n=100)	Interpretation of Thematic Findings
Persuasive-Narrative	The <i>Guru</i> uses local narratives such as <i>Hikayat Datu Kalampayan</i> to convey Islamic values emotionally. Example: <i>Guru Zuhdi</i> said, "This story reflects the noble values of our ancestors." The congregation of <i>Ibu Siti</i> felt that they understood the religious message better through this story.	85% of respondents stated that local narratives were very helpful in understanding religious messages.	Banjar folk narratives are effective in building emotional attachment and understanding of religious messages.
Humorous-Religious	<i>Guru Rasyid</i> uses Banjar humour, for example, "If our tongues cause problems, don't blame the rice we eat!" Young congregant <i>Hendra</i> admits that the lectures are more interesting and relatable because of the humour.	78% of respondents felt that humour made lectures more interesting and less boring.	Contextual humour lightens the mood, builds rapport, and reduces the social distance between the preacher and the congregation.
Symbolic-Cultural	<i>Guru Ilham Homaidi</i> wears traditional Banjar clothing when preaching and uses terms such as <i>baimbai</i> to describe <i>ukhuwah Islamiyah</i> (Islamic brotherhood). <i>Mr. Hasan's</i> congregation feels that the preaching belongs to them because it uses local symbols and language.	82% of respondents felt closer to <i>Guru</i> , who used local cultural symbols and language.	Local cultural symbols and language reinforce the message of the sermon and enhance community acceptance and identity.
Overall Effectiveness	The integration of this communication style creates preaching that is down-to-earth, communicative, and inclusive, in line with Banjar cultural values. The congregation is more motivated to practice Islam.	75% of respondents felt that a cultural approach made them more motivated to practice Islam.	A local culture-based approach to sermon communication improves understanding, emotional closeness, and behavioural change.

The table demonstrates how each communication style—narrative, humour, and symbolic use of culture—enhances audience engagement and message internalization. Qualitative data reveal how specific rhetorical strategies are used in practice, while survey results quantify the congregation's perceptions and responses, showing strong alignment between observed practices and audience impact. The mixed-methods approach thus strengthens the validity of the findings: ethnography provides depth, while the survey adds breadth and generalizability within the study context.



The three styles of preaching—persuasive-narrative, humorous-religious, and symbolic-cultural—synergistically form a pattern of preaching communication that is not only rhetorically effective but also meaningful in the socio-cultural context of South Kalimantan society. This finding reinforces the relevance of Gudykunst's in Setiawan (2025) and Aziz et al., (2025) theory of cross-cultural communication, which states that adaptation to local values and norms is key to building successful intercultural communication. Da'wah is not merely a process of transferring religious teachings but also serves as a medium for social transformation that preserves local cultural continuity while strengthening the Islamic identity of the community. These results are in line with the findings of Chandrasari et al. (2025) and Mawarni & Muthoifin (2024), which show that da'wah communication will be more accepted if it accommodates local wisdom and uses cultural symbols that are close to the daily lives of the audience. This approach helps avoid resistance to religious messages and encourages the natural and continuous internalization of values.

Going forward, further research should be directed toward exploring the long-term impact of implementing these styles of preaching on changes in congregational behaviour, particularly in terms of social and spiritual aspects. Additionally, the development of digital da'wah continues to grow alongside technological advancements and the widespread use of social media (Ningsih & Surawan, 2025). As noted by Anwar & Surawan (2024), these platforms have become powerful tools for disseminating religious messages due to their ability to reach vast and diverse audiences (Saumi & Widiastuty, 2024). Overall, this study proves that adapting local culture-based da'wah rhetoric can create religious communication that is inclusive, relevant, and rooted in community life. A style of da'wah that directly touches on local cultural values not only facilitates the delivery of messages but also strengthens a sense of belonging to religion, making da'wah a transformative, harmonious, and sustainable process of cultural communication.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the success of Islamic preaching (*da'wah*) in South Kalimantan depends greatly on how well preachers (*Guru*) can connect religious messages with Banjar local culture. Three main communication styles were identified: persuasive-narrative, humorous-religious, and symbolic-cultural. Each of these styles helps the congregation understand, feel connected to, and apply Islamic teachings in daily life. Stories like *Hikayat Datu Kalampayan*, Banjar-style humour, and the use of local terms like *baimbai* not only make sermons more engaging but also help preserve the community's cultural identity. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of religious communication by showing that effective da'wah is not only about logic and emotions (ethos, pathos, logos), but also about using cultural values that people relate to. By using the ethnography of communication approach, the research was able to explore how culture and religion work together in the preaching process.

In practical terms, these findings can help preachers and da'wah institutions develop more relevant and inclusive ways to communicate Islamic teachings, especially in areas with strong local traditions. This study also recommends that preacher training programs include education on local culture, so that *da'i* are better prepared to speak to different audiences across Indonesia. Of course, this research has limitations. The number of participants was small, and it focused only on the Banjar community in South Kalimantan. The findings may not fully apply to other regions or cultural groups. Also, because the researcher is familiar with the local culture, personal views may have influenced the interpretation of some data. For future studies, it would be valuable to compare similar research in other regions to

see how da'wah styles differ across cultures. Researchers could also use surveys or experiments to measure how effective these communication styles are in changing religious understanding or behaviour. Another interesting area to explore is how local culture can be included in digital da'wah, such as on YouTube or Instagram. In the end, this research supports the idea that da'wah is not only about spreading Islamic teachings but also about keeping local traditions alive. When done well, culturally grounded preaching helps bring people closer to religion while also strengthening community values and social harmony.

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