

## THE DAKWAH TRILOGY OF RHOMA IRAMA IN THE INDONESIAN DANGDUT MUSIC STAGE

<https://uia.e-journal.id/alrisalah/article/3517>

DOI: 10.34005/alrisalah.v15i1.3517

**Firdaus Turmudzi**

[firdausqeis@gmail.com](mailto:firdausqeis@gmail.com)

*Universitas Islam As-Syafiiyah*

**ABSTRACT:** *This research delves into the way Rhoma Irama integrates the arts of music, religious preaching, and politics within the urgency of his religious propagation. Rhoma Irama has successfully utilized the art of music, especially in the dangdut genre, as an effective tool to convey the message of religious preaching. Through song lyrics and his performances, he has communicated messages of morality, religion, and nationalism to a wide audience. The art of music serves as a bridge connecting Rhoma Irama with his fans, enabling him to inspire and influence many people through this art. This research employs an interactive qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The descriptive approach is utilized to examine and clarify occurring phenomena by gathering data from relevant literature studies aligned with the research focus. The collected data is subsequently analyzed using explanatory analysis techniques. This study aims to demonstrate the role of Rhoma Irama in integrating his passion for dangdut music as well as his efforts in realizing moral and religious values, thus transforming it into a pursued medium of religious propagation. The results of this study indicate that a prominent aspect of Rhoma Irama's preaching is his active involvement in efforts to disseminate the teachings of Islam to the community. Rhoma Irama emerges as a figure who plays a significant role in spreading religious, moral, and nationalistic messages in Indonesia. His contribution extends not only to the world of music but also in other forms that shape social and political order. In this ever-evolving era, the understanding of how art, preaching, and politics can mutually support each other in the urgency of proselytizing can provide valuable insights into the comprehension of religion, art, and politics in contemporary society.*

**Keywords:** *Trilogi, Dakwah, Rhoma Irama, Dangdut, Seni Musik, Politik, Tablig.*



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## A. Introduction

Islam is currently the majority religion in Indonesia. To spread the teachings of Islam, various methods are employed, one of which is through preaching (dakwah). Preaching essentially involves the realization of faith that is manifested within a system of human activities aimed at conducting social engineering by endeavoring to influence how individuals perceive, think, behave, and act in accordance with social guidance and normative teachings.<sup>1</sup>

The existence of propagation (dakwah) emerged when humans were entrusted as stewards on Earth. The Islamic religion was disseminated and introduced to mankind through peaceful propagation activities, devoid of violence, coercion, or the use of weapons. This was exemplified by the actions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Thus, this responsibility is also borne by all Muslims until the Day of Judgment. In order to instill an interest in the teachings of Islam brought by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), a correct understanding, experience, and even strategies are required to achieve the goals of propagation.

Based on this understanding, Muslim preachers and scholars who continue the struggle of Prophet Muhammad SAW. feel inspired to innovate in carrying out the preaching process. This effort is essentially undertaken so that Islam, as a contextual religion, remains relevant in various cultural settings within society, by providing and modifying the media used as a means of preaching. This is done to make the preaching process more accessible, conscious, contextual, and appealing to a wider audience. One of the alternative means that can be utilized to capture the attention of the preaching target is through art.

Translating your sentence into English while considering its grammatical rules: "Human as the object of preaching (*mad'u*) is a sentient creature, whereas the emotional or affective aspect is something that must be aimed at so that the message of preaching can stir the heart of the *mad'u*.<sup>2</sup> The affective aspect is expected to be touched upon after the cognitive effect occurs in the *mad'u*, which ultimately will lead to the conative effect, namely practicing the da'wah message that has been understood and accepted by them.<sup>3</sup> From this perspective, it is evident that aesthetics or artistry become important aspects to be considered in the activities of preaching. One of the branches of art referred to is the art of song lyrics. Song lyrics are literary works favored by the community. This is because song lyrics possess an allure in terms of linguistic beauty, themes, sentence structures, and also the sequence of music that can stir the

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. KH. Miftah Faridl, *Refleksi Islam, Ikhtiar Memaknai Gagasan Islam Kultural*, Bandung: Pusdai Press, 2001, h. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Hajir Tajiri. (2015). *Etika dan Estetika Dakwah*. Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media. h. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Moh. Ali Aziz. (2015). *Ilmu Dakwah*. Jakarta: Kencana. h. 458

souls of its enthusiasts. Music itself is an expression of inner emotions, released regularly in the form of auditory language (song). When this outpouring of inner emotions is vocalized through the mouth, it's called vocal, and if it's expressed through musical instruments, it's called instrumental.<sup>4</sup>

In discussing about preaching within music, Rhoma Irama is a revolutionary figure in the Indonesian music scene, who attempted to improvise verses through words crafted into songs, then packaged with beautiful musical arrangements. Born in Tasikmalaya, this man presents preaching in a distinct manner from the usual. Many of his song lyrics discuss religious values. He struggled to spread the prophetic message of Islam through the art of music. The genre he brought forth is called "dangdut," which later became a means of preaching due to his calling as a Muslim. History clearly notes that Rhoma played a significant role in promoting the preaching movement through the medium of music. Ricklefs, a contemporary historian from Australia, even wrote that Rhoma has led the Islamization development through dangdut music in Indonesia, particularly from the 1970s until now. According to Ricklefs, Rhoma has conveyed Islamic piety in a trendy manner through his works that are rich with moral guidance.<sup>5</sup>

Since the beginning of his career in the dangdut music industry, Rhoma Irama has demonstrated his interest in religious values. In the late 1980s, Rhoma Irama experienced a transformation in his personal life. He began to approach various Muslim scholars and intellectuals who introduced him to deeper religious concepts. His involvement in this process also motivated him to delve deeper into Islamic teachings and apply them in his daily life, further inspiring him to contribute to the spread of Islamic teachings to society. He felt that as a prominent public figure with significant influence, he had a moral responsibility to share religious values with his audience.<sup>6</sup>

Over time, Rhoma Irama became increasingly involved in religious lectures and preaching in various places. He infused his lectures with his life experiences, incorporating elements of musical artistry and skillful delivery. This approach made religious messages easier to comprehend and relevant to audiences from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Rhoma Irama's engagement in the pulpit of preaching resulted in a significant impact on society. On

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<sup>4</sup> Sidi Gazalba, *Islam dan Kesenian : Relevansi Islam dengan Seni-Budaya Karya*. Manusia, (Jakarta : Pustaka al-Husna, 1988), h.815.

<sup>5</sup> Ricklefs, M. C, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern*. Terj. Dharmono Hardjowidjono, Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2012. h. 219.

<sup>6</sup> Shofan, M. *Rhoma Irama, politik dakwah dalam nada*. (Penerbit Imania, 2014). h. 56.

the lecture stage, he adeptly combined his artistic prowess with his knowledge of Islam, enabling his messages to inspire, educate, and motivate many individuals. His presence in the preaching pulpit, emphasizing the conveyance of religious messages to the broader community, has also become an integral part of the religious landscape in Indonesia. This phenomenon raises questions about Rhoma Irama's role in articulating religious values and morality through the medium of dangdut musical art.

Rhoma Irama's involvement in the formation of the morality of his missionary journey spread even to the political world. In the early 2000s, he actively participated in various political activities, including running as a presidential candidate in the 2004 Presidential Election (Pilpres) in Indonesia. Rhoma Irama's political efforts were not only based on his popularity in the music world but also on the messages he wanted to convey in the political arena. He championed agendas that emphasized morality, social justice, and the protection of traditional values in society. Rhoma Irama clearly communicated his political commitment based on religious principles and social conservatism by combining his vision of religion and morality. In his campaign, he advocated religious values, morality, and social responsibility as the foundation for the social and political transformation he desired.<sup>7</sup>

Rhoma Irama's journey that expanded his missionary work through the medium of music, the pulpit of preaching, and political exploration represents a phenomenon reflecting the complexity of a public figure's role in shaping social, religious, and political perspectives in Indonesia. This transformation not only illustrates the significant role of art in disseminating religious messages, but also underscores the convergence between religion, entertainment, and the political domain. Despite garnering widespread attention, particularly for the delivery of missionary messages, Rhoma Irama's journey remains inadequately documented, especially in scholarly literature that highlights his missionary activities as both a preacher and a political figure. Consequently, the emphasis on Rhoma Irama's missionary trilogy becomes an intriguing subject for investigation.

This research aims to depict how the missionary movement undertaken by Rhoma Irama through the stages of dangdut music performances, the pulpit of preaching, and political engagements, subsequently referred to as Rhoma Irama's Missionary Trilogy. From an academic perspective, this study is expected to broaden insights into the field of missionary studies, particularly in the context of missionary efforts through music, the delivery of religious messages, and involvement in the political arena. On a practical note, it is hoped that this

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, h. 57

research can inspire missionary activists to consistently and innovatively promote the practice of enjoining good and forbidding wrong through various means, including the art of music, the conveyance of missionary messages, and participation in the realm of politics, akin to the endeavors of Rhoma Irama.

## **B. Literature Review**

A discourse about Rhoma Irama's preaching is not a new study, as conceptually, this theme has been studied for a long time. Several literature works related to this theme include the book entitled "Political Preaching in Tones," written by Moh. Shofan, one of Indonesia's authors who comprehensively examines and documents the biography and career journey of Rhoma Irama. This book also highlights Rhoma as a Musician, Preacher, and Politician. Shofan explores the development of music from the colonial era to the present day in Indonesia, particularly dangdut music, which has now been recognized as the distinctive music of ASEAN countries. This book also illustrates the condition of Malay music from its inception to the era when Rhoma Irama transformed Malay songs into dangdut music, which has continued to evolve to the present day.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, through research conducted by Saefudin in his dissertation entitled "Islamic Educational Values in the Lyrics of Dangdut Songs by Rhoma Irama (A Hermeneutic-Semiotic Approach)," which specifically aims to reveal a number of facts that can be utilized to explain the social dynamics during the creation of the song and the discourses accompanying it. This research employs Jurgen Habermas' critical social theory and the theories of genetic structuralism, as well as hermeneutics, semiotics, and social history.<sup>9</sup> The difference between the author's research and this research lies in the aspect under study, which is that the researcher places greater emphasis on how Rhoma Irama integrates his works into music as a medium and means of preaching (dakwah) carried out by Rhoma Irama.

Next, a study conducted by Wildan Al Basith titled "The Role of Rhoma Irama's Preaching Through Dangdut Art from 1975 to 2003." The background of this research is that dangdut music is one of the mediums used by Rhoma Irama as a means of preaching, conveying religious messages within the song lyrics. Thus, indirectly, the community that listens to it can

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<sup>8</sup> Shofan, M. *Rhoma Irama, politik dakwah dalam nada*. (Penerbit Imania, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Saefudin. (2019). *Nilai-nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Lirik-lirik Lagu Dangdut Rhoma Irama (Suatu Pendekatan Hermeunetika-Semiotika)*. (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang).

easily accept and embrace these messages. The issue addressed in this study is how Rhoma Irama's preaching through the lyrics of dangdut songs can influence society.<sup>10</sup>

The research conducted by Umayya, Y. F. reveals that music is one of the mediums that can be used as a means to convey religious messages, thus being accepted by the community, especially the younger generation. Its entertaining nature can be utilized by singers or artists to incorporate religious messages into it. Consequently, the community indirectly accepts it willingly and finds it non-monotonous to listen to repeatedly, even to emulate it. The issue addressed in this research is whether there are monotheistic values within the lyrics of songs composed by Rhoma Irama, categorized as the monotheism of lordship, divinity, and names and attributes. This research aims to describe and analyze the monotheistic values within the lyrics of songs composed by Rhoma Irama.<sup>11</sup> The prominent difference in the research conducted by the author lies in the focus on the general function of da'wah (Islamic preaching) and Rhoma Irama's journey in utilizing music as a means of da'wah.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Sustyorini, E. depicts in her dissertation the presentation of music trends in Indonesia originating from America, including Rock, Jazz, Latin, Lambada, Ethnic, Rap, and Orchestra music. Indonesian musicians have endeavored to adopt dangdut music as the host, as dangdut is often associated with Javanese Malay songs that are more easily understood by listeners. Rhoma Irama, a renowned musician, played a significant role in evolving dangdut music since the 1970s, making it more acceptable to the society and introducing new musical instruments. He also integrated religious aspects into his music through the Soneta Group. This research focuses on the paradigm shift of Rhoma Irama's dangdut music, which initially was conventional-traditional and transformed into a more trendy and creative form. Factors influencing this change encompass efforts to preserve Indonesian culture, the ambition to revolutionize dangdut music, and the aim to convey social messages.<sup>12</sup>

### **C. Research Method**

This research constitutes an interactive qualitative study that enables the researcher to gain a profound and comprehensive understanding in order to produce research conclusions in

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<sup>10</sup> Al Basith, W. *Peran dakwah Rhoma Irama melalui seni musik dangdut tahun 1975-2003* (Bachelor's thesis, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta).

<sup>11</sup> Umayya, Y. F. (2018). *Nilai-nilai Tauhid dalam syair lagu karya Rhoma Irama* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim).

<sup>12</sup> Sustyorini, E. (2008). *Perubahan Paradigma Musik Dangdut Rhoma Irama* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Muhammadiyah Malang).

the form of narrative, intertwined with interactions between the researcher and the subject of study. A descriptive approach is employed to examine and clarify a phenomenon, achieved by collecting data from literature studies, which involves exploring literature coherent with the research focus, and combined with field research to obtain additional data through both direct (face-to-face) and indirect (electronic media) interviews. The data analysis conducted by the researcher employs the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, involving stages such as data collection, data reduction, data presentation, as well as drawing conclusions and verification.

#### **D. Findings And Discussion**

Raden Haji Rhoma Irama, popularly known as Rhoma Irama (born December 11, 1946), is an Indonesian singer, musician, songwriter, producer, and actor of Sundanese descent. Starting from the late 1960s, he embarked on his music career as Rhoma Irama, being a part of the pop band Orkes Melayu Purnama, pioneering various elements of dangdut music. Later, he formed his own band called Soneta Group, achieving significant musical success with an innovative dangdut style that combined Western, Malay, and Bollywood influences. By the late 1970s, he began transitioning towards a more Islam-oriented approach, leading a righteous popular music culture. During the peak of his fame in the 1970s, he was dubbed the "King of Dangdut" with his Soneta Group. He also established his career in the film industry and was actively engaged in the political arena, notably participating in campaigns for the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan or (PPP)).

This research focuses on a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the concept of the "Trilogy of Dakwah" according to Rhoma Irama. This dakwah trilogy encompasses three main aspects that constitute the core of Rhoma Irama's dakwah activities: "Dangdut," "Tablig" (preaching), and "Politics."

#### **Dangdut As a Dakwah Media**

Rhoma Irama, one of the singers who often performs songs with Malay rhythms. In essence, Rhoma Irama is a Pop singer. Since his school and teenage years, he had joined youth bands like Tornado, Varia Irama Melody, and The Gay Hand. During that time, he was able to perform styles and songs from Paul Anka, Tom Jones, and Andy Williams. In 1963, with his group Gayhand, he entertained volunteers stationed in Irian Jaya. Due to frequent shows, his education was disrupted; he even repeated a grade twice. His residential

environment in the Tebet area was renowned as the hub of Malay orchestra groups. This situation had a psychological impact on Rhoma, leading him to perform as a Malay singer, which at that time was still looked down upon. Pop and Rock groups mocked the Malay rhythm by imitating the sound of the drum dang... dut... dang... dut."<sup>13</sup>

During the period from 1968 to 1971, Rhoma joined Malay music groups such as OM Chandraleka, OM Sinar Bali, OM Pancaran Muda, OM Mustika, El Budriyah, and OM Purnama led by Awab Harris, better known as Awab Purnama. It was in OM Purnama that Rhoma Irama began to feel that his musical soul resided. Awab was the one who promoted Rhoma for recording with the song "Berilah Jawaban," followed by a duet with singer Titin Yeni on the song "Ke Bina Ria," which was quite explosive at that time and made his name more recognized. Then, in 1969, he released a solo album titled "Aku Saudaramu." It was also in OM Purnama that Rhoma later found his eternal duet partner, Elvie Sukaesih, who was already well-known in the Malay music scene. Together with Elvie, Rhoma Irama recorded several songs that subsequently elevated their names, leading them to be crowned as the King and Queen of Dangdut.<sup>14</sup>

In the early 1970s, Rhoma Irama began to step into the Pop music world in the band group de Galaxies, led by Jopie Item, and Zaenal Combo led by Zaenal Arifin. In de Galaxies, Rhoma Irama released an album titled "Djangan Kau Marah" under the production of the Canary Record label. This album marked Rhoma Irama's first album in the Pop music genre.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, in the band group Zaenal Combo, they released 4 Pop albums that were sung, namely: "Djangan Dekati Aku", "Di Rumah Sadja", "Sip Sipan Bedue", and "Tjintaku Di Surabaya". The production was under the Canary Record and Bali Record labels.<sup>16</sup>

In the late 1970s, Rhoma Irama formed a Malay Orchestra group named OM Soneta on December 11, 1970, in Gang Seno, West Tebet, South Jakarta. All members of Soneta, consisting of Rhoma (guitar/vocals), Herman (Bass), Kadir (Drums), Ayub (tambourine), Riswan (organ), Hadi (flute), Nasir (mandolin), and Wampy (guitar), pledged and swore to

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<sup>13</sup> Saefudin. (2019). *Nilai-nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Lirik-lirik Lagu Dangdut Rhoma Irama (Suatu Pendekatan Hermeneutika-Semiotika)*. (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang). h. 62.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*,... h. 62

<sup>15</sup> Website resmi Rhoma Irama [www.Rhomairama.info](http://www.Rhomairama.info), *Rhoma Irama Album Pop – Djangan Kau Marah*. <https://Rhomairama.info/album-pop/> (diakses pada 31 Januari 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Website resmi Rhoma Irama [www.Rhomairama.info](http://www.Rhomairama.info), *Rhoma Irama Album Pop* <https://Rhomairama.info/category/seni/diskografi/album-pop-melayu/album-pop/> (diakses pada 31 Januari 2023).

together build Soneta to achieve success, on par with the already famous music groups of that time. Rhoma himself chose the name Soneta for the dangdut music group he led. Soneta is one of the forms of poetry that he enjoys. Soneta consists of three-line verses, four-line content, fourteen lines in total. Rhoma likes this poetic form, and he also likes the name.<sup>17</sup>

The soneta is an Italian literary form that originated around the mid-13th century in the city of Florence. It later spread throughout Europe, including England and the Netherlands. This literary form entered Indonesia in the 1920s, brought by Indonesian youth who were studying in the Netherlands. This literary form is characterized by 14 lines, 2 quatrains (4-line stanzas), and 2 tercets (3-line stanzas), with the rhyme scheme abba, abba, cdc, cdc. Rhoma Irama chose this name because during his time in high school (Sekolah Menengah Atas or SMA), he greatly admired the sonnet poetic form, and later he applied it in writing the lyrics of his songs.<sup>18</sup>

The emergence of Rhoma with the Soneta Orchestra, which was founded in 1970, captured the attention of Indonesian society. Alongside Elvy Sukaesih, Rhoma Irama recorded many highly popular and timeless songs such as "Mandul," "Cincin Kawin," "Cinta Abadi," "Kuda Lumpung," "Jangan Dulu," "Mawar Merah," "Pelangi," and many others. These are just a few of the dozens of masterpieces that he, together with Soneta, produced under the umbrella of Remaco, the largest record producer at the time. All of these albums exploded phenomenally, even earning the Golden Record award for Rhoma Irama and the Soneta Group.<sup>19</sup>

Since October 13, 1973, together with the Soneta group he led, Rhoma has been increasingly successful. He has obtained 11 Golden Record awards from his cassette tapes. Based on cassette sales data and the number of audiences in the films he starred in, Rhoma's fans number no less than 15 million, which is 10% of Indonesia's population. This record is accurate up until mid-1984. "No other contemporary art form has such a wide scope." Meanwhile, Rhoma himself says, "I'm afraid of publicity. It turns out, I have been dragged far away."<sup>20</sup>

After successfully elevating the status of Malay rhythmic music, or more commonly known as dangdut music, Rhoma and Soneta continued their endeavor by venturing into the field of Islamic preaching and propagation. The motto "Voice of Moslem" became their new

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<sup>17</sup> Moh. Shofan, *Rhoma Irama: Politik Dakwah dalam Nada.....*, h. 47.

<sup>18</sup> Moh. Shofan, *Rhoma Irama: Politik Dakwah dalam Nada.....*, h. 47.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, ... h. 47.

<sup>20</sup> TEMPO, 30 Juni 1984.

concept, with the aim of rejuvenating Malay music by blending rock elements into it. Rhoma Irama and the Soneta group revamped dangdut music to be more dynamic, energetic, and competitive with the flourishing rock music and other Western genres such as jazz, pop, disco, and country. During that era, Rhoma Irama and the Soneta group innovated conventional dangdut music by replacing all acoustic musical instruments with electric ones (such as electric guitars, bass, and drums), incorporating vocal effects into song compositions reminiscent of the rock group Deep Purple, creating a distinctive rock ambiance while preserving the distinct characteristics of dangdut music through drum beats.<sup>21</sup>

This is based on his concern for the music world in the 1970s. During that time, the Western rock music euphoria was shaking the young generation, with bands like Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, and others. Meanwhile, the influence during the early days of the New Order, especially on the youth, tended to be snobbish (imitative). In the Indonesian rock music stage performances, the audience, especially the youth, only focused on the stage antics, attire, and the singer's shouts, especially when they successfully performed songs with stage antics similar to those Western rock musicians. This situation made Rhoma feel anxious because the rock music he knew was associated with satanic themes, flamboyant dressing styles, rebellious lyrics, and calls for indulgence without religious boundaries. As a result, music became only for pleasure, chaos, and an accompaniment to sinful acts. In his distress, Rhoma said to himself, "I love music, but I also fear Allah," he expressed. In every prostration, he prayed earnestly. "O Lord, if this music widens my path to hell, please stop my path here, and remove this gift of musical instinct from me. But if it can bring Your approval, please guide me, O Allah."<sup>22</sup>

The revolution in dangdut music initiated by Rhoma Irama is not only evident in terms of the musical instruments used and his stage performances. Beyond that, he is also adept at conveying various realities of life through symbolism and aesthetic elements. Whether it's matters of love, social issues, politics, religion, daily life, or even spiritual aspects, he packages them all in the form of songs with unique lyrics and musical harmony. This is what makes his works have an allure that can touch and inspire various groups of

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<sup>21</sup> Artikel Pemusik, *Rhoma Irama: Dangdut atau Melayu sama saja .....*, h. 9

<sup>22</sup> Delivered at the public lecture of H. Rhoma Irama at the Auditorium of IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya on December 23, 2011 at 13:53

listeners. As a result, his works, from the past to the present, remain fresh and continue to be enjoyed, sung, studied, and even debated within academic circles.<sup>23</sup>

Rhoma Irama and all members of the Soneta Group have demonstrated strong determination in enhancing the role of the Soneta Group as a means to convey the messages of the Islamic religion. On October 13, 1973, they officially declared the Soneta Group as "The Voice of the Moslem." In this statement, they committed to utilizing the Soneta Group as a medium to promote positive values and reject any forms of behavior that are not in line with the teachings of Islam. This transforms music not merely into entertainment, but also into a vehicle for providing information, knowledge, unity, and religious propagation to the community. If religious propagation is understood as an effort to improve the situation, then Rhoma Irama deserves to be called a true "dai-musician." He is a preacher who spreads the message of religious propagation through the vessel of dangdut music. This approach depicts the endeavor of religious propagation through cultural elements that permeate society, adhering to the principles of intelligent, argumentative, inspiring, patient, and steadfast propagation.

### **Tablig as a form of personal da'wah**

Since his childhood, Rhoma Irama has shown a strong interest in understanding religion. Tempo Magazine revealed that from a young age, Rhoma had already held a strong interest in learning about religion. He diligently attended religious study sessions, both at mosques and directly at the home of Islamic scholars. After graduating from high school, Rhoma, along with his sibling Benny Muharram and three of his friends, intended to study religion at Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School in Jombang. However, because they didn't purchase train tickets, they were eventually removed from the train by the conductor in Solo.<sup>24</sup>

Rhoma Irama stated, "I never experienced traditional Islamic boarding school education, but I had the intention to study at Tebuireng Islamic boarding school; however, fate had other plans." Failing to study at the boarding school did not dampen Rhoma Irama's enthusiasm for learning about religion. On various occasions, Rhoma mentioned that he continued his studies beneath the piano. By this, he meant that during recording or shooting breaks, he utilized the space under the piano to study the Quran and religious books.

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<sup>23</sup> AR, N. W., & Maskur, M. (2021). Trilogi Dakwah Rhoma Irama: Dangdut, Tablig, dan Politik. *Dirasat Islamiah: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 2(2), h. 111-112.

<sup>24</sup> *Majalah Tempo* 2016, h. 63.

Consequently, it is not surprising to hear his recitations of the Quran and Hadith, along with his profound religious insights, as if he had studied at a boarding school for years. From a young age, Rhoma enjoyed offering advice to his friends. His path in religious propagation began on the stages of religious events, originating from an invitation by the late KH. Saifuddin Amsir. However, long before that, Rhoma had already displayed his interest in spreading religious teachings through speeches, both political and religious, including his involvement with the PPP from 1977 to 1982.<sup>25</sup>

Suryanto wrote down Rhoma Irama's statement during a lecture commemorating the 40 years of Soneta Group in 2011 in Tebet, South Jakarta. In the lecture, Rhoma conveyed that several religious scholars had once advised him to stop playing music and instead focus on spreading Islamic teachings. However, Rhoma humbly requested permission to continue his mission of spreading Islamic teachings while still engaging in music. He said, "I seek permission, respected scholars, for music is my line, and this music is my stance. While scholars are tasked with duties at Islamic boarding schools and mosques, I ask for your permission to be involved in music. Why? Because humans possess an inherent artistic sense, a nature bestowed by Allah that cannot be altered. Indonesia is predominantly Muslim. If Muslims were to abstain from participating in musical activities, leaving a cultural void, then music and Indonesia's cultural sphere would undoubtedly be filled by non-believers, while Muslims merely listen. If we were to forbid music, others would exploit it. With this perspective in mind, I humbly seek permission from the scholars to persist in our efforts through music."

Rhoma Irama was also active in preaching before his popularity as an artist. He was involved in political speeches and preaching activities with the United Development Party (PPP) from 1977 to 1982. In a statement, Rhoma Irama reflects his determination to preach through music, even though some scholars have advised him to stop playing music. He stated that music is his talent and calling, and that prohibiting music would only allow others to dominate it. With this viewpoint, he requested permission from scholars to continue his struggle through music.<sup>26</sup>

The dual role as an artist and preacher is not only found in Rhoma Irama. Previous scholars like Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi and Sunan Kalijaga also utilized art as a means of

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<sup>25</sup> Wawancara dengan Rhoma Irama, tanggal 29 Mei 2023 di kediaman Rhoma Irama.

<sup>26</sup> AR, N. W., & Maskur, M. (2021). Trilogi Dakwah Rhoma Irama: Dangdut, Tablig, dan Politik. *Dirasat Islamiah: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 2(2), h. 116

preaching. Similarly, modern scholars like Anregurutta K.H. Abdurrahman Ambo Dalle in South Sulawesi, who employ art in their preaching efforts.<sup>27</sup>

Rhoma Irama has also often collaborated with renowned preachers, such as K.H. Zainuddin MZ, and even conducted grand Islamic preaching events together with them in various regions. Their close friendship is reflected in the film "Nada dan Dakwah" (1991), which serves as a representation of the "Nada dan Dakwah" brand associated with Rhoma and Zainuddin MZ. Alongside K.H. Zainuddin MZ, Rhoma established the Fahmi Tamami organization in 2007 to counter the takeover of mosques and prayer halls by certain groups. This demonstrates Rhoma Irama's commitment to preaching and his role in upholding religious values within Indonesian culture.<sup>28</sup>

### **Politics as an Expansion of the Dakwah Media**

Since the New Order era, Rhoma Irama has demonstrated his strength. He has provided significant political contributions to the Partai Persatuan dan Pembangunan (PPP). In the 1982 General Election, PPP managed to secure the second position with substantial voter support, showcasing Rhoma's influence in politics. Rhoma is also known as a dangdut singer who is capable of gathering a massive crowd, not only in Indonesia but also in countries such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam.<sup>29</sup>

Muhaimin, a politician, considers that Rhoma's nomination by the PKB in the 2014 Presidential Election was an appropriate step as Rhoma is perceived to possess the vision and mission to advance the nation. Rhoma, as an Islamic icon, feels compelled to step forward as a presidential candidate. Although this news has garnered both positive and negative reactions, there are those who support it, viewing Rhoma as a deserving representative of the Islamic community, such as the Himpunan Artis Peduli Bangsa (HARPA) from East Java, which has declared its support.

The offers from religious scholars and nobles made Rhoma feel entrusted by Allah to engage in politics. PKB officially endorsed him as a presidential candidate. However, in the end, Rhoma switched to supporting the Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno pair in the 2014 presidential election after Muhaimin decided to support the Jokowi-Kalla pair.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, h. 116

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, h. 116

<sup>29</sup> Romantika Sihir Rhoma, Sumber: Majalah Detik Vol. 51.

<sup>30</sup> AR, N. W., & Maskur, M. (2021). Trilogi Dakwah Rhoma Irama: Dangdut, Tablig, dan Politik. *Dirasat Islamiah: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 2(2), h. 118

Although PKB was not successful in nominating Rhoma Irama as a presidential or vice-presidential candidate, on various occasions during interviews with the media, Rhoma Irama stated that his efforts were not in vain. For example, when interviewed in one of the broadcasts on a private TV station, Rhoma Irama mentioned that he didn't consider it a problem if he didn't gain anything from the electoral process. In fact, he felt grateful and proud to be able to contribute positively to the country. In this regard, Rhoma Irama played a role in the success of the elections and had an impact on the number of seats obtained by PKB in regional and national legislative assemblies throughout Indonesia. (Talkshow "Tatap Mata" Trans7 edition May 10, 2014).

In the 2014 election, despite the political situation not deterring the King of Dangdut from playing an active role in the political stage, together with friends and supporters from various backgrounds such as Islamic scholars, clerics, intellectuals, experienced politicians, and fans united under the Forsa group (Fans of Rhoma and Soneta), he announced the establishment of the Partai Idaman (Islam Damai Aman)" on October 14, 2015, coinciding with the 1st of Muharram, 1437, at Proclamation Monument, Jakarta. During this founding declaration event, the vision, mission, and political direction of the Idaman Party were revealed, which is to promote the benevolent face of Islam as a bestower of mercy to the entire universe and to realize Indonesia as a nation that fully respects the principles of Pancasila.<sup>31</sup>

After going through the participant registration process of the 2019 General Election and facing challenges that led to the conclusion of legal efforts in the Administrative Court (PTUN), the Idaman Party finally had to accept the reality that they were not accepted as participants in the 2019 General Election. In this situation, Rhoma took a political step by inviting all members of the Idaman Party, supporters, and fans to support the PAN Party. Some members of the Idaman Party also decided to register as prospective members of the legislature through PAN at various levels, ranging from regional to provincial and central levels. Rhoma's decision to support PAN was still based on the spirit of "*izzul Islam wal muslimin*," in line with the motivation he had upheld previously (Republika, 2019).

Although his political career journey is filled with changes and controversies, Rhoma Irama remains consistent with the ideological political message of advocating the greatness of Islam and the Muslim community (*izzul Islam wal muslimin*). His courage in both politics and preaching serves as an exemplary model for political actors in Indonesia.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, h. 120-121.

Rhoma Irama has successfully utilized the art of music, particularly the dangdut genre, as an effective medium to convey religious messages. Through song lyrics and stage performances, he has conveyed moral, religious, and nationalist messages to a wide audience. Music has served as the bridge connecting Rhoma Irama with his audience, enabling him to inspire and influence many people through his art.

A prominent aspect of Rhoma Irama's religious outreach is his active involvement in spreading the teachings of Islam to the public. This has created a personal connection with his followers and provided them with the opportunity to delve deeper into the religious teachings. Rhoma Irama's engagement with the world of politics is not merely an achievement in political circles; it's also a means to influence policies and public opinions. In his role as a politician, he has advocated for the moral and religious values he believes in. His political involvement has become an important channel to manifest the urgency of his religious mission within Indonesia's social and political spheres.

One striking finding of this research is the synergy between music, preaching (tablig), and politics in the urgency of Rhoma Irama's religious outreach. He has successfully maintained harmony among these three aspects, ensuring that the moral and religious messages conveyed through his music remain consistent with his views and actions in preaching and politics. This reflects his integrity in carrying out his mission.

Through the collaboration of music, preaching, and politics, Rhoma Irama has given relevance to his religious outreach within Indonesia's social and cultural context. He has managed to integrate religious values with the social and political realities faced by Indonesian society. This approach has made his messages more relatable and pertinent to people's daily lives.

Overall, this research has delved deep into the urgency of Rhoma Irama's religious outreach, involving the collaboration of music, preaching, and politics, which is referred to as the "Trilogy of Rhoma Irama's Dakwah." Rhoma Irama emerges as a figure with a significant role in spreading religious, moral, and nationalist messages in Indonesia. His contributions extend beyond the realm of music to various other forms that shape the social and political landscape. In this ever-evolving era, understanding how art, preaching, and politics can support each other in the urgency of religious outreach provides crucial insights into the understanding of religion, art, and politics in contemporary society.

## E. Conclusion

The long journey of Rhoma Irama as a preacher-musician for nearly fifty years has created various experiences, including sweet, bitter, and controversial moments that have become precious parts of his preaching history. He is known as one of the pioneers of the preaching movement through the art of music in the modern era. His preaching approach is deeply rooted in culture and down-to-earth, following the principles of wise, argumentative, inspirational, patient, and strong preaching.

In addition to preaching through the art of music, which also extended into the world of filmmaking, Rhoma Irama remains active in preaching from the pulpit of religious gatherings since the 1980s until the present day. As a preacher, Rhoma Irama, with his unique characteristics, always remains an attraction that can gather a large following, even without the accompaniment of the Soneta Group.

Rhoma Irama's involvement in the political world is not merely an achievement in politics, but also a means to influence policies and public perspectives. In his role as a politician, he has advocated for the moral and religious values he believes in. His involvement in politics has become an important channel to realize the urgency of his preaching in the social and political influence of Indonesia. Despite changing political party affiliations several times, even to the extent of establishing his own party (Partai Islam Damai Aman), his message remains consistent, which is to fight for the glory of Islam and Muslims. Through the collaboration of music, preaching, and politics, Rhoma Irama has provided a relevant urgency to his preaching in the social and cultural context of Indonesia. He has successfully integrated religious values with the social and political realities faced by Indonesian society. This has made his message more accepted and relevant in the daily lives of the people.

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