CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In this era of economic, information and cultural globalization, it is marked by the disappearance of territorial, national, religious and spiritual, political and cultural borders that has previously been regarded as the obstacle of global interaction. Globalization thus offers countless openness and freedom: free-market economics, free communication (the Internet) and free sex. This openness promotes the proliferation, multiplication and diversification of borderless products, information, signs and pleasures in the global scale, which also offers myriad of choices (Piliang 2010).

As proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, a new model of growth has been used in this late capitalism, called *rhizome*. *Rhizome* is very different with tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order. The principles of *rhizome* model are connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity and rupture (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Consequently, all contact each other. An entity –social, political, cultural, economic, sexual or religious- that contacts with another subsequently creates a sort of in-between area,

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grey or *trans* area: between politics-economics, between economics-sexuality, between commodity-religion (Piliang 2003).

Because of these borderless circumstances, all are at risk. All are so transparent that are vulnerable to the intruders or viruses. They are potential to harm the existing system. Similar within the cell, viruses are parasites of living being that cannot survive on their own if they do not settle into a plant, animal, or human cell, and consume its food and energy. After invading the cell and multiplying themselves, viruses can harm or modify the system or structure of the cell (Yahya 2001).

Piliang (2010, p. 181) argues that every contact disseminates viruses. Thus, if an entity contacts with another, a virus enables it to develop to its extreme or vanishing point, a point where it loses its natural characteristics and identity. A contact between sexuality and commodity or mass media results in the commodification of body and the sexual disappearance (prostitution, striptease, pornography, *cyberporn*); between politics and mass media causes popularization of politics; between religion and commodity or spectacle industry leads to the commodification of religion and the vagueness of religious values.

Figure 1.1   **Figure 1.2**   **Figure 1.3**

Suster Keramas **Movie**   **Jokowi and Dahlan Iskan**   **Ustadz Solmed**

In such condition, all are commercialized, commodified, and based on profit-oriented measure. Nothing is escapable from the *rhizomatic*, capital-based network of the late capitalism: education, body, sport, disease, religion, spirituality, poverty, and even death. Piliang (2010, p. 161) states realities are (re)produced by following models offered by the media. Disneyland, Lionel Messi, Naruto and Spiderman are models in constructing images, values and meanings in social and cultural realities. Both media and fantasy world are, in fact, as real as school subjects or philosophy because they offer information and construct people's behaviors and lifestyle. Thus, media is extremely crucial in influencing the process of socio-cultural changes or transformation and has either positive or negative implications towards those changes. One of them is television.

Television has significantly become an inseparable part of human life nowadays. Since its first emergence in 1925, television is undeniably the most adorable mass media in the world amid the competition with the Internet and other

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new mass media. Totona (2010, p. 2) claims, in the United States, people waste their time more for watching television (1633 hours per person per year or 5.4 hours in a day, in 2000) than for other media. This phenomenon also occurs in Indonesia, which is 54% for less than 4 hours/day and 46% for more than 4 hours/day. Moreover, the percentage of above-10-year-old people watching TV also increases steadily from 84.94% in 2003 to 90.27% in 2009 (BPS 2012).

However, television has recently been public spotlight because of its negative (destructive) effects to the society, particularly to the children. Violence, sexuality, hedonism and consumerism are major issues regarding with public objection towards TV broadcasts. As Religion Minister Suryadharma Ali stated following the commemoration of National Kids Day in Jakarta on 23 July 2012, "Various violent and pornographic scenes are still watched so easily that influence children's viewpoints and give negative impacts towards children." (Muhammad 2012) These issues cannot also be detached from the media logics: adorable, marketable and profitable. The more adorable one program is, the more marketable it is because of its magnetism, thus the more profitable it is for the producer or TV broadcaster of the program, for instance *Opera Van Java, Dahsyat, Indonesian Idol*. Hence, the main purpose of television is to keep the viewers watching, whenever and wherever they are, regardless of the impacts to the viewers' psycho-socio-cultural condition.

The writer uses the term "viewers" in this study to refer to people who watch television, rather than "audience" or "reader". As elaborated by Fiske in *Television*

Culture (1987, p. 16-17), "Audience" refers to a homogenous mass of people who are all essentially identical, who receive the same messages, meanings, and ideologies from the same programs and who are essentially passive. "Reader" means the producer of texts or the maker of meanings and pleasures, who has productive ability as the result of social experience or training. Meanwhile, "viewer" specifically refers to someone watching television, making meanings and pleasures from it, in a social situation that is compounded of both the social relations/experience of the viewer and of the material, usually domestic, situation within which television is watched. Thus, "viewing" is specific to television; "reading" is common to all texts.

To keep the viewers staying in front of it, television consequently offers the viewers abundant interesting programs. Fiske (cited in Totona 2010) defines TV program as "stable, fixed entities, produced and sold as commodities and organized by schedulers into distribution package". Consequently, TV program holds a pivotal role in drawing the viewers to make profit as the commodity. A number of programs broadcasted in television are soap opera, reality show, music, comedy and so on. Talent quest show is one of them.

Talent quest shows become one of television's largest and fastest growing industries in Indonesia, in addition to celebrity gossip shows and soap operas. Talent quest show also has many themes, in particular religious theme. One example of successful religious talent quest shows is *Pemilihan Da'i Cilik* (*Pildacil*) broadcasted by AnTV. Corresponding to Fiske's definition of TV program, Casey (cited in

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Heryanto 2008) also states that TV programs are commodities, produced and distributed industrially with profitability as an operational imperative. Within this industry, success breeds imitators as each competitor seeks to replicate previous successes. To go along with the success of *Pildacil*, *Da'i Muda Pilihan* thus emerged.

Figure 1.4 *Da'i Muda Pilihan* Logo

Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV, which is used as the object of this study, is a TV program aimed to search for the young talented Islamic preachers or *da'i* (aged 17-25) from the auditions held in Medan, Yogyakarta, Banjarmasin, Makassar, Bandung, Surabaya, and Jakarta. *Da'i Muda Pilihan* was broadcasted by ANTV every Saturday and Sunday at 07.30 PM, starting from November 2011 to February 2012.

The winner of this program is *Da'i* Muhammad Azhari Nasution (17) from Medan, followed in order by Mursyidah Nurfadilah (20) from Makassar and Nizam Zulfikar (23) from Yogyakarta, as announced in the grand final held in Studio AnTV Epicentrum Complex on Sunday, 5th of February 2012. As the winner, Azhari deserved for the prizes such as 75-million cash, two *hajj* tickets, encyclopedia

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"*Leadership and Management Rasulullah*", and scholarship for bachelor and master degree (WowKeren.com). Despite of his being financially-limited, Azhari asserted that he did not want to be notoriously known as "celebrity *dai"* and was open for criticisms and suggestions for his better future. As quoted in Kompas.com,

> *I feel so grateful and thankful to my family. My father is becak driver and my mother has a small stall in the house. Criticize me if I make mistake. Wish me luck to keep consistent (istiqomah). Unlike da'i setting tariff or celebrity da'i. It's not competition. All are winner in dakwah.*

Figure 1.5	Figure 1.6	Figure 1.7
Da'i Azhari Nasution	*Da'i* Rona Mentari	*Da'i* Pratu Agus

Da'i Muda Pilihan uses Islam as its central theme and is basically intended as a means of *dakwah* (Islamic propagation), given Islam is still majority in Indonesia,

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with 204.8 millions of Moslems in 2010. The general meaning of *dakwah* is to summon, nearly equivalent with *tabligh*. Syukir (1983, p. 18) states that *da'i* is a person who summons, proclaims or performs Islamic missionary endeavors. In the spiritual (psychological) level, the personality of *da'i* comprises matters of characteristic, attitude and self-ability (Syukir 1983). The basic characteristics of *da'i* are: devout and faithful to *Allah,* sincere and truthful to people's (*ummah*) interest, welcoming and affable, *tawadlu'* (modest and unpretentious), honest, unselfish, enthusiastic, patient, *tawakkal* (accepting), tolerant, open and democratic. In terms of the attitude of *da'i*, it also has a prominent part in determining the success of *dakwah*. It consists of: benevolence, exemplariness, discipline and wisdom, responsibility, and broad-mindedness. Finally, this wide range of characteristics and attitudes need to be completed by intellectual capacity of *da'i*, both related with techniques and material of *dakwah* (preaching).

Following the media logics: adorable, marketable and profitable, contestants in *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* consequently modify their performance in order to seduce the juries and the viewers to send SMS or calling for vote. This modification of performance is subsequently decoded differently by the viewers so that their reception towards *da'i* and *dakwah* in *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* has gradually shifted. The viewers' decoding towards a TV program varies depending on their social background and experience, such as class, age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and education. According to Parkin and Hall (cited in Fiske 1987), occupation is the most

influential factor in producing socially motivated differences of reading because it is prime definer of class.

Decoding is a process of understanding the messages on the audience side, which is open to various interpretations as it is polysemic (William 2003). Hall (2003, p.195) argues that the content of media is encoded ideologically so that there is one dominant message coming from media's tendency to reproduce the meaning preferred by the powerful groups in society. Because of this reason, Hall proposes a concept of *Decoding* to understand the media texts or messages from the audience side. Media texts are open to various interpretations depending on the audience's social background and experience. Hall, as quoted in William, distinguishes three kinds of decoding: *dominant, oppositional* and *negotiated*.

> The dominant - or hegemonic - reading accepts the preferred meaning encoded in the text. The oppositional reading occurs when people understand the preferred reading, reject it and decode meaning according to their own values and attitudes, and a negotiated reading is where people adapt rather than completely reject the preferred reading. (William 196)

By understanding the logics of global capitalism, namely speed and libido, the writer is completely interested in exploring whether *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* can be

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seen as the commodification and vagueness of religious values, as argued by Piliang, since religion contacts with commodity and spectacle industry (television), or it is, in the contrary, a form of (re)contextualization of *dakwah* to the fast-changing, libido-driven society. Besides, this program may also be categorized as the reduction of the process or ritual of becoming *da'i*, following the concept of instantaneousness. Instantaneousness is a mental pressure of taking action without delay (Piliang 2011).

The writer uses qualitative approach and in-depth interview as the method of data collection in order to understand the decoding of Islamic congregation members (*jama'ah pengajian*) towards the program by giving them the opportunities to share their opinions and viewpoints. The writer mainly focuses on the Islamic congregation members of *Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya* (MAS). MAS is the second largest mosque in Indonesia following *Masjid Istiqlal* in Jakarta so that MAS has the biggest number of congregation members in Surabaya compared to other mosques. MAS congregation is regularly held on the main room of the mosque twice in a day, after dawn and sunset prayer (*ba'da subuh dan maghrib*). To become member of MAS congregation does not need any either formal registration or certain uniform to participate. Thus, many people participate in MAS congregation because of easiness and flexibility it offers, depending both on topic they like and time they have. Finally, this study applies Hall's dominant-negotiated-oppositional decoding as the framework to analyze the data and adapts both Ang's haters-ironists-lovers and Puryanti's haters-

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ambivalents-lovers in order to explain how *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* leads the Islamic congregation members to redefine the concept of *dakwah* and *da'i*.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

How do the Islamic congregation members (*jama'ah pengajian*) decode *da'i* and *dakwah* in *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* and redefine the concept of *da'i* and *dakwah*?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the statements of the problems above, the objective of the study is:

To know how the Islamic congregation members (*jama'ah pengajian*) decode *da'i* and *dakwah* in *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* and redefine the concept of *da'i* and *dakwah.*

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is aimed at finding out how the Islamic congregation members (*jama'ah pengajian*) decode *da'i* and *dakwah* in *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV*. The members' decoding or reading towards the program leads the members to redefine the concept of *da'i* and *dakwah*. The concept of *da'i* and *dakwah* intended to be found here is based on the performance (way of preaching and clothes) of the contestants in *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV*.

This study attempts to encourage the readers to become critical viewers when they realize that there is something changing or strange in their society, so that they are expected to be more courageous in expressing their critical opinion. This study is also expected to give contribution both for cultural studies in general and students of English Department in particular by giving understanding of how the members of Islamic congregation (*jama'ah pengajian*) decode *da'i* and *dakwah* in *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* and redefine the concept of *da'i* and *dakwah* in order to be more critical to the society we live in.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

- Commercialization: A process of turning objects into commodities whose prime purpose is commercial or profit-oriented

- *Dakwah*: An act of summoning whose main purpose is to lead to the right way and leave the wrong (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*)

- *Da'i*: A person who summons or performs Islamic missionary endeavors (Syukir 1983)

- Decoding: A process of understanding the messages on the viewer's side (William 2003)

- Instantaneousness: A mental pressure of taking action without delay (Piliang 2011)

- Redefinition: A process of defining the meanings of words or phenomena by considering recent circumstances

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- Viewer: Someone who watches television, making meanings and pleasures from it (Fiske 1987)