

Commerce, Knowledge, and Faith: Islamization of the Modern Indonesian and Han-speaking Muslim Ummahs

商業、知識與信仰：現代印尼與漢語穆斯林社群之伊斯蘭化

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Tainan, TAIWAN
2020

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New Media, Post-Islamist Piety, and Cyber Islam: Islamic Knowledge Production in Modern Indonesian Society

Noorhaidi Hasan

Introduction

The growth of new modes of interactive communication, such as satellite television, the Internet, cellular phone, and social media, has become one of the most crucial factors in informing the recent dynamics of Islam all over the world. Although the new media did not necessarily give rise to democracy and multiculturalism in Muslim society, it contributed a great deal to reshaping a sense and structure of public that was already available. An embryo of “public Islam” emerges and poses a challenge to the secularist definition of the boundaries and content of the public sphere.¹ In fact, the transparency engendered by the new media provides spaces for cultural encounters on different levels among diverse individuals and increases the scope, intensity, and forms of involvement of the individuals in a multiplicity of overlapping public spheres.

Paradoxically, in some cases the new media helps militant Islamic groups carry out violent mobilization for the interest of their own. The eruption of Islamic militancy tide in the post-Suharto Indonesia, for instance, confirmed such an ambivalent role of the new media.² Shortly after the fall of the regime in May 1998

¹ Armando Salvatore and Dale Eickelman, “Public Islam and the Common Good,” in Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman eds., *Public Islam and the Common Good*, Leiden: Boston, Brill, 2004, pp. xi-xxv.

² Noorhaidi Hasan. “In Search of Identity: the Contemporary Islamic Communities in Southeast Asia,” *Studia Islamika* 7: 3 (2002), pp. 67-110; Robert W. Hefner, “Civic Pluralism Denied? The New Media and Jihadi Violence in Indonesia,” in Dale Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson eds., *New Media in the Muslim World, The Emerging Public Sphere* 2nd ed. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003, pp. 158-179.

a number of militant Muslim groups came to the forefront to demand the comprehensive application of the Shari'a (Islamic law). In various demonstrations they petitioned the Indonesian Muslims to stand shoulder-to-shoulder and support their aspiration for the Shari'a, whose enforcement is deemed highly necessary to curb the current crises and disasters afflicting Indonesia. Using the new media, both implicitly and explicitly they questioned the format of modern nation-state and expressed their concern with the establishment of an Islamic state.³

Nevertheless, the momentum of the radical Islam explosion in the post-Suharto Indonesia has apparently faded away. The attempts made by the Indonesian government to respond to the rising threat of terrorism in post-9/11 events by both taking various preventive and early warning measures and implementing strategic policies and intelligence operations have significantly reduced rooms to manoeuvre that had been available to the groups. Opposition arose among mainstream Muslim organizations, such as the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah, that represent the majority of Indonesian Muslims. They have been active in launching advocacy programmes for disseminating Wasatiyyah Islam in the society.

At the twilight of Islamic militancy tide that has engulfed the post-Suharto Indonesia, Islamic teaching sessions at five-star hotels, religious congregations in luxurious housing complex, expensive tours of Islamic holy sites, mass ritual programs like Dhikr Akbar (remembrance of God), pop, chic, youthful and cool trends in Da'wah activities, and Islamic motivational management trainings, among other practices, come to regain a solid ground, this time complete with objects associated with an Islamic identity which are available primarily via the marketplace and new media.⁴ Being articulated in a contemporary fashion Islam appears in these programs to be no longer dominated by long homilies on religious doctrines and the

³ Syamsul Rijal, "Media and Islamism in Post New Order Indonesia: the Case of Sabili," *Studia Islamika* 12: 3 (2005), pp. 421-474; Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*, Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University, 2006.

⁴ On new trends in urban da'wah among Indonesian Muslims, see, for instance, Noorhaidi Hasan, "Funky Teenagers Love God: Islam and Youth Activism in Post-Suharto Indonesia", in Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, eds., *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*. Santa Fe: University of New Mexico and School for Advanced Research Press, 2016, pp. 151-168; Najib Kailani, "Preachers-cum-Trainers: The Promoters of Market Islam in Urban Indonesia," in Norshahril Saat, ed., *Islam in Southeast Asia Negotiating Modernity*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2019, pp. 164-192; Yanwar Pribadi, "Pop and True Islam in Urban Pengajian: the Making of Religious Authority," in Norshahril Saat and Najib Burhani, eds., *The New Santri Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2020, pp. 213-238 and Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Rise of Cool Ustadz: Preaching, Subcultures and the Pemuda Hijrah Movement," in Norshahril Saat and Najib Burhani, eds., *The New Santri Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2020, pp. 239-277.

life in the hereafter, or calls for a return to true Islam which nurtures some hatred of global popular culture trends, which is claimed to have led to the moral decline of Muslims and threatened Islamic cultural values. It is now imbued with practical messages about the way to live in harmony.

This chapter aims at examining how the new media plays a role in the dynamics of Islamic knowledge production and in fostering a new sense of identity and piety, which has developed into a phenomenal urban religious landmark of present-day Indonesia.

Post-Islamist piety

Supported by the expansion of the new media, new modes of piety which conceal a clear shift from the earlier emphasis of Islamism on Islamist polity toward that on personal piety have arisen on the landscape of the Indonesian public sphere. Being styled in accordance with (upper) middle class and new wealth's appetite and symbolized by religious insignia of all kinds, different kinds of trendy, performative religious programs have attracted the attention of a diverse range of Indonesian Muslims, especially an emerging middle class which thrived as an impact of the government's mass education programme enabling a large number of Indonesians to pursue a higher education. They belong to the category of new religious audiences who are not interested in Islamist's agenda of reforming Islam and society in a total manner and demanding the replacement of the existing system with one based on the Shari'a.⁵ Despite their growing consciousness to objectivise the meaning of being Muslim in a globalizing world, the emerging Muslim middle class no longer questioned the compatibility between Islam and modernity. They project a pluralist vision of Islam and believe that Islam is necessary modern if implemented in a proper manner.

Asef Bayat conceptualizes this phenomenon as post-Islamist piety, a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains.⁶ It represents an endeavour to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty. It is to marry Islam with individual choice and freedom, with democracy and modernity to achieve what some have termed an "alternative modernity." Bayat further argues that post-Islamism serves primarily as theoretical construct to signify change, difference, and the root of change. The advent of post-Islamism does not necessarily mean the

⁵ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Post-Islamist Politics in Indonesia," in Asef Bayat, ed., *Post-Islamism The Changing faces of Political Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 157-182.

⁶ Asef. Bayat, "What is Post-Islamism," *ISIM Review* 16: 1 (2005), p. 5.

historical end of Islamism. What it means is the birth, out of the Islamist experiences, of a qualitatively different discourse and practice.

As far as this author is concerned, post-Islamist piety can be seen as an alternative which gains ground amidst the failure of the project that attempts to position Islam as a political ideology and thereby change the political landscape of Muslim states. The experiences of many Muslim states confirm that the project has instead stigmatized Islam and transformed it into an enemy of modern civilization. No doubt, it emerges as a sort of hybrid practice, a process of cultural transactions that reflects how global cultures are assimilated in the locality.⁷ Through the instruments of globalization, including the print media, radio, television, the Internet, and mobile phone, Muslims are in fact becoming closer to the global leisure market which commodifies and regularizes the avant-garde trends and practices. Being a “good” Muslim is thus possible without necessarily sacrificing the privileges he or she has enjoyed from modernization and globalization.

Jenny B. White (2005) emphasizes that post-Islamist piety is the evidence of the rise of a personalized Muslim-hood, which allows one to demonstrate his religious identity through bodily purchased practices and goods, thus apart from political engagement and its religious mooring.⁸ With the growth of intermediate class capable of utilizing “Islamic” market opportunities for their business expansion and packaging Islam for mass consumption, the market and media become increasingly critical in defining the identity of a “Muslim”. Everything labelled “Islamic” is largely advertised and sold both in traditional markets and in the Muslim section of luxury goods department stores, ranging from typical Muslim fashions, such as Jilbab (headscarf) for women and Bajukoko (Muslim shirts) for men with their trendy and colorful styles to special makeup and skin products with the halal label as well as various kinds of pop and hip-hop Islamic music. It is precisely via the marketplace and media, Muslimhood has become fashionable.

The Muslimhood model provides both a challenge and an opportunity to rethink the established boundaries between the private and the public. It has come up short against the seemingly immovable boundaries, which hardly see any compromise between the religious and the public. These boundaries become increasingly irrelevant when religious institutions undergo a process of differentiation and institutional specialization, which seemingly encourages religious roles to be specialized within the individual conscience. Individual can thus choose a widened range of options among a wide assortment of religious representations, traditional

⁷ García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p. 25.

⁸ Jenny B. White, “The End of Islamism? Turkey’s Muslimhood Model,” in Robert W. Hefner ed. *Remaking Muslim Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 87-111.

religious ones as well as secular new ones, manufactured, packaged, and sold by specialized service agencies.⁹ The free choice, in turn, provides the individuals an opportunity to patch together the religious fragments into a subjectively meaningful whole and transform them into a powerful symbol to act in public.

Islamic knowledge production

There is no doubt that the burgeoning of post-Islamist piety is closely linked to the dynamics of knowledge production among Muslims. Production, development, dissemination, authorization, and not least appropriation of Islamic knowledge are by definition situated and contested. Taking Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition,¹⁰ it follows that perceptions of Muslims about what proper Islamic knowledge entails are situated and contextual. Hence the appropriate means, and techniques and practices through which knowledge is being produced and reproduced. These perceptions are central to the views and debates about the interaction of Muslims with their social environment all over the world. Although there is no single, universal standard about what Islamic knowledge entails, understanding the dynamics of knowledge production is crucial as a prerequisite in apprehending what it means to be Muslim and how modern Muslim subjects are formed.

The notion of Islamic knowledge production should be taken in a broad sense to include not only 'Aqida (theology), 'Ibada (devotional practice), Akhlaq (morals), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and in general Ijtihad (Islamic reasoning), but also all kinds of non-discursive ritualized, performative and embodied forms of knowledge production, such as prayer, ritual, and bodily practices that denote worship and religiousness.¹¹ Taking religion as a practice of mediation¹² and in understanding religion as a human practice, it is impossible to separate discursive and non-discursive dimensions and to ignore the mutual interaction between discursive and non-discursive dimensions of knowledge production. Activities and practices that formally speaking falls outside the religious field are crucial in understanding what

⁹ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 36-37.

¹⁰ Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Occasional Paper Series), Washington DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986.

¹¹ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Making and Unmaking Muslim Religious Authority in Western Europe," paper read at the *Fourth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting* (Florence: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, 19-23 March, 2003).

¹² Birgit Meyer, *Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion* (inaugural lecture), Amsterdam: VU University, 2006.

it means to be Muslims in the world today. Therefore it also needs to take into account activities and discourses that comment on the position of Muslims as members of society and activities and discourses that are considered appropriate to being Muslim in particular social environments.

As a means to produce knowledge, education is central to the everyday life of Muslims.¹³ There is an intricate, mutually constitutive relation between the production of Islamic knowledge through education and everyday experiences of Muslims as citizens. Many Muslims believe that education has a prominent role in building character and morality, as reflected in their way of thinking, attitudes, and everyday practices. Mediated through schooling, both formal and informal, and mosque-based religious activities such as preaching and sermon, its purpose is not simply to impart knowledge, but also to achieve a comprehensive Tahdhib (moral edification) as a means to shape Muslim personalities.¹⁴ There is no surprise that education is seen as a key to a larger social transformation among Muslims.¹⁵

This larger social transformation spurred by the expansion of the new media has caused a serious challenge to traditional forms of Islamic authority.¹⁶ The new media has allowed for a tremendous increase in the number of voices in the public sphere. Spokespersons legitimized by conventional means of religious conveyance are complemented and challenged by “rival and alternative articulations of belief and practice”.¹⁷ New technologies of communication circumvent traditional centers of learning and, not least, Muslims in the western world, where they constitute

¹³ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

¹⁴ Patrick Gaffney, *The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994; Gregory Starrett, “Muslim Identities and the Great Chain of Buying,” in Dale Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson eds., *New Media in the Muslim World, the Emerging Public Sphere*, 2nd ed., Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003, pp. 80-101.

¹⁵ Linda Herrera, “Islamization and Education in Egypt: between Politics, Culture and the Market,” in John Esposito and Francois Burgat eds., *Modernizing Islam: Religion and the Public Sphere in Europe and the Middle East*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003, pp. 167-192; and Robert Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

¹⁶ See e.g. Dorothea Schulz, “Promises of (Im)Mediate Salvation: Islam, Broadcast Media, and the Remaking of Religious Experience in Mali,” *American Ethnologist* 33: 2 (2006), pp. 210-229; idem., “Morality, Community, Publicness: Shifting Terms of Public Debate in Mali,” in Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors eds., *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 132-151; and Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam: International Relations of the Muslim World*, London: Routledge, 2007.

¹⁷ Dale Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson eds., *New Media in the Muslim World, the Emerging Public Sphere*, 2nd ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, p. x.

minorities, engage with parts of the public sphere that are considered secularized. Traditional forms of religious knowledge and conveyance do not match with life-worlds in many Muslim countries anymore, particularly among young people. Today young Muslims, more than ever, feel the need to reflect on the origins of their religion and reconcile them with their experiences to live in a globalizing world. The complexities of modern urban life in which the majority of young Muslims live, requires specific competences. New media have not only caused a “globalization of Muslim affairs”, but have also created “new publics” among ordinary Muslims that could not be reached by traditional leaders and traditional means.¹⁸ These new publics ask new questions and challenge traditional production of knowledge by traditional Ulama. This has resulted in a fragmentation and multiplication of publics that often have to be addressed at once.

Ready-to-use Islam

Built on individual choice and freedom, post-Islamist piety presents Islam in a ready-use standard directly correlated with the interests and lifestyles of the new religious audiences who need practical references about the way to understand and apply religious messages, yet do not want to sacrifice their status as members of the (upper) middle class. Such references are normally not found in long homilies of the Ulama, who use to hold the rights and duties to make sure that all major developments in politics and society are in conformity with God’s commands on the grounds that they are most knowledgeable in the sciences of the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet. While the Quran and Sunna remain their fundamental frame of reference, the Ulama are hardly frozen in the mold of the Islamic religious tradition and its traditional pattern of dissemination.¹⁹ In changing circumstance as a result of the expansion the new media they seek to migrate online as well, to provide religious messages to a larger group of audiences through mailinglists, Facebook, and whatsapp and instagram conversations. In contrast to the long homilies of the Ulama, these materials appear to be an interactive means of communication, by that the new Muslim intellectuals might foster Islam as part of modern global culture.

In fact, post-Islamist piety has paralleled with the mushrooming of a kind of

¹⁸ Ibid. See also Gary R. Bunt, *iMuslims Rewiring the House of Islam*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009; and Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments are Transforming Religious Authority*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018.

¹⁹ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 10.

motivational books and self-help manuals which approach Islam more from the perspective of a popular culture. Instead of demonstrating Islam as an alternative system, the manuals are more concerned with practical messages about the way to live in harmony and reconcile Islam with modern life, dealing with diverse issues which often come up among Muslims, including fashion, teenage romance life, emotional intelligence, and Islamic banking. The manuals contain practical guidelines to cope with daily problems, from the psychological to economic and healing. Readers are not forced to put their worldly ambitions out of sight in order to seek religious rewards. Instead they are given a sort of renaissance to live as Muslims, but at the same time, enjoy the benefits of modern progress and globalization. One such example is the Saudi reformist Shaykh ‘Aydh Abdullah al-Qarni’s “La Tahzan” (Don’t Be Sad) which has recently achieved the height of its fame among Indonesian Muslim readers, eclipsing any other types of Islamic books. The main message of the book is that readers should not give up trying to do what they really aim to do. Wherever and whenever there are love and motivation, they are to survive any challenges and constraints, and thus, eventually realize their dreams.

The popularity of Shaykh al-Qarni’s book has inspired a number of Indonesian new religious intellectuals to write similar works. For instance, Muhammad Arifin Ilham, known for his expertise in holding attention of audience when he leads the mass ritual program *Dhikr Akbar*, has published *Menzikirkan Mata Hati* (Clean up Heart’s Eye) and *Pesan-Pesan Spiritual Penjernih Hati* (Spiritual Messages of Cleaning Hearts). Ilham has been regularly appearing on various national television channels presenting short lectures on Islam. He was the founder of *Majlis Az-Zikra*, a sort of holding company which incorporates several business enterprises. Abdullah Gymnastiar, more commonly referred to as Aa Gym, has also published *Bangkit! Manajemen Qolbu untuk Meraih Sukses* (Wake up, Heart Management for Success) and *Menggapai Qolbun Saliim: Bengkel Hati Menuju Akhlak Mulia* (Reaching Peaceful heart: Spiritual Workshop towards Fine Attitude). The initiatives of these two celebrity preachers have been followed by other preachers, including Jeffry al-Buchori, known as a friendly *Ustaz Gaul* (religious teacher), Yusuf Mansur, Adi Hidayat, and more recently such as Hanan Attaki, Handy Bonny, Evie Effendi, and Abdul Samad etc.

The mushrooming of the self-help manuals has in turn eclipsed the popularity of the Islamist books that emphasize the need to return to pure, authentic Islam. Since the fall of Suharto in May 1998, thousands of Islamist books have been published. In addition to those by Indonesian Islamists, Adian Husaini, Ramly Nawawi, Abu Deedat Syihabuddin, Nuim Hidayat, Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, Muslim Nasution, and Anis Matta, among other writers, there are translations of the works originally

written in Arabic by well-known Islamist ideologues such as Hasan al-Banna, Sa'id Hawwa, and Muhammad al-Qahthany. Instead of projecting middle path and dialogue with modern civilizations, these books tend to explore the meaning of Shahada and the obligation for Muslims to apply Islam in a more comprehensive manner. In an attempt to champion the authentic Islam, these books criticize any other Islamic groups deemed to have disseminated deviant thoughts and ideas to the extent that the Muslim community is no longer concerned with the need to maintain Islamic identity and solidarity. Accusations are directed to the West blamed to have worked hand-in-glove with Zionist to undermine Islam.

There are a dozen publishing houses concerned with the dissemination of Islamist thoughts, including Gema Insani Press, Pustaka al-Kautsar, Pustaka al-Alaql, Robbani Press, I'tishom, al-Izzah, Pustaka Mantiq, Pustaka Azzam, Asy-syamil, Darul Falah, Mawardi Sinergi, Pustaka Tarbiatuna, An-Nadwah, Al Fatih Press, and Pro U Media. These publishers saw the zeal of Islamic revival which the university campuses in Indonesia have witnessed over the last twenty years as market opportunities for Islamist books and other publishing products.²⁰ They are ready to compete with publishing houses such as Mizan, LKIS and Serambi presses, which are concerned with the publication of books on moderate Islam written by well-known reformist Muslims both at home and abroad, including Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, Hasan Hanafi, Mohammad Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayid, Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, Abdullah Ahmed al-Naem, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Khalid Abu Fadhl. In contrast to the Islamist books, the latter seek to demonstrate the flexibility of Islam in the face of the complexities of the modern world and build dialogues with modern civilizations.

Commodifying Islam

A new sense of piety which has primarily developed among the urban Indonesian Muslim middle class has in one way or another reduced religious beliefs, symbols, and values into free-floating signifiers to be consumed like anything else. As such, it takes them from their original contexts and throws them into a cultural marketplace where they can be embraced in a shallow fashion but not necessarily put into practice. New technologies of communications accelerate this process through the production and appropriation of "religious" goods. Now a variety of "Islamic products", including Qur'anic CDs, soap opera DVDs, inspirational

²⁰ Akh Muzakki, *the Islamic Publication Industry in Modern Indonesia: Intellectual Transmission, Ideology, and the Profit Motive* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Queensland, Australia, 2009.)

plaques and bumper stickers, calligraphic watchers, three-dimensional models of devotional practices, posters and jigsaw puzzles depicting the mosques in Mecca and Medina, greeting cards, board games, and computer software, including Qur'an and al-Hadith database, and computerized aids to Qur'anic recitation and Arabic learning, are available in the marketplace, side-by-side with various more conventional ones, such as trendy, colorful Jilbab, Muslim T-shirts, perfumed oils, and veiled Barbie dolls.

The close relationship between commodification and consumption requires mediators that may act as the bridge communicating and interlocking the interest of both producers and consumers. Herein lies the significance of life-style periodicals to accelerate the process of distributing and consuming Islamic products, public Islam thus has been burgeoning. As far as being concerned, commodifying Islam is more an issue of packaging Islamic faith for mass consumption. To introduce their products to broader market, producers need to use the media, through which consumers become aware of their products. Frequently, the media plays a crucial role in dictating market tendencies, by dominating certain fashion and lifestyle trends. The media itself has a direct effect, i.e., the increase of audiences that need fresh references to the latest and most popular fashions and lifestyles.

Life-style periodicals that advertise Islamic pop culture began proliferating in Indonesia in the 1990s (2009). Its forerunner is perhaps the monthly *Amanah*, adopted from Arabic word meaning "trust", which has appeared regularly since its first edition in 1987 and contested the only pop culture magazine hitherto available in Indonesia, *Kartini*. However unlike *Kartini*, *Amanah* displays beautiful female models wearing Jilbab on its covers, complete with features about the life experiences of young women or models themselves when they decided to wear Jilbab, and left behind their previous lifestyles. *Amanah* serves as a window for its readers to get access to the latest Islamic products. In addition to diverse advertisements, ranging from cosmetics to housing and apartments with veiled women as models, it contains special features, such as fashions, lifestyles, celebrities, Islamic soap operas, spiritual experiences, and Islamic books. Choosing pop culture with luxury and expensive performances, *Amanah* has succeeded in attracting a relatively established urban Muslim middle class, and this has become the key to its continued existence amidst the influx of new similar magazines.

In 1990s, *An-nida* (adopted from Arabic word meaning "call to") appeared to deliberately target the segment of teenage Muslimat hitherto untouched by any other publications. Initially this magazine belonged almost exclusively to its founders, Dadi Kusradi and DwiSeptiawati, who happened to be a couple, working with the assistance of their staff, before it became associated with PT. Ummy Group Media, which publishes the monthly magazine Ummy (Arabic word meaning "my mother").

An-nida has very much focused on fictions exploring the life experiences of teenage Muslimat in the face of hurly-burly and temptations of modern urban life. Supportive in nature, these fictions attempt to foster the piety of teenage Muslimat so that such good characters as honesty, perseverance, and consistency are embedded in their daily life. *Annida* claims to have five main missions that indicate its attempt to assist teenage Muslimat to maintain their religious identity, on the one hand, and draw upon global popular culture trends, on the other hand. It has become an example of how a synthesis is created through cultural hybrid practices.

Ummi has targeted Muslim women and house wives as its audiences, and upheld the slogan of “the Identity of Muslim Women”. Besides the regular headlines discussing current (heated) issues related to Muslim woman affairs, Ummi has special features called “Mutiara Islam” (Islamic Jewelry), which consists of detailed discussions on Fiqh Wanita (Feminist Islamic Jurisprudence), Mar’ah Shalihah (Pious Women), Mutiara Dakwah (Jewelry of Islamic Preaching), Tafsir al-Qur’an (Qur’anic Exegesis) and Sunnah (Traditions of Prophet Muhammad). It also covers miscellaneous articles and features on the Muslim world as well as regular features on Halal foods, health, psychology, family, and household financial management, plus features on beauty and Muslim fashions. The magazine includes short stories and novel series as supplements. The popularity of Ummi is equal to that of Sabili which used to be the most prominent of Indonesia’s Islamist magazines. Its distribution reached 80,000 copies per edition in 2000.

Recently, similar magazines have emerged with smaller scales and different focuses of coverage. Noor, Paras, and Anggun are three examples of this category offering alternative readings on Islamic pop culture. Noor has some similarities with Amanah in terms of lay-out, content, and coverage; while Paras with Ummi. Anggun is designed as Islamic wedding party magazine which advertises the latest and trendy Muslim wedding costumes characterized by colorful Jilbab and other Islamic accessories. It also contains articles and features on Islamic wisdom of and preparation prior to marriage. It also advertises wedding party packages in luxury hotels. Paras and Anggun are under the same umbrella, PT Variapop Group which also publishes the monthly Hidayah (Intisari Islam). The latter focuses its coverage on stories about death and harsh punishments for committing grave sins. In the first quarter of 2006, surprisingly perhaps, this magazine was ranked the top according to the Nielsen Media Research rating survey, leaving behind its competitors in this particular segment, especially Hikayat, Ghaib, and Taubah.

Cyber Islam

The advent of the Internet technology has further facilitated the emerging mode of Islamic knowledge production. Through the Internet, new religious interpreters define or extend the public space of religious discourses by offering programmes accessible and open to everyone. Potential participants might choose whichever programmes they like to attend to meet their interests and needs. Those who cannot attend such programmes may request materials for self-learning through internet. Furthermore, the Internet enables them to discuss the contents of the programmes with other members within cyber space communications. The ability of the internet technology to provide spaces for interpersonal dialogues has in turn bolstered the potential for a more democratic religious realm. In cyber-civic space everyone can involve in discussing and debating current topics and issues from different perspectives and understandings. The interactive natures of the internet characterize presentations that do not homogenize the faith brought on-line so much as affirm universal access and a sense of participation in a public sphere of listeners, watchers, or, in cyber-speak, browsers. This affirms new senses of interpretive freedom to go beyond previous forms and responsibility to speak for Islam in a “civic” public that goes beyond transferring discussions from more to less restricted realms.²¹ The move is not just from private to public, but a blur of distinction through communication and interpretation that bypasses the gatekeeping and sanctions embedded in older media. Just as print bypassed by the scriptorium, the internet bypasses institutions of mass media and those attached to it that currently has been institutionalized through editors, publishers, acceptable genre, and marketing to specific readership.

Keeping pace with the rapid spread of the internet technology, websites, mailing-lists, Whatapps, Instagram and Facebook have continued to offer multiple versions of Islam to the public. Despite the fact that the number of Internet users remains relatively small, this on-line Islam is able to connect audiences across class, background, and discipline, and drive them to involve actively in cyber religious discussions. The internet built into open access, flattened hierarchies, freedom of information, and more subtly notions of transient, purposive connections among people and between pieces of information. In fact, through the websites and mailing-lists internet users can update information and knowledge not only about Islam but also religious programmes advertised on-line and the development of new media technologies-based Islamic products, as mentioned above. No doubt, the Internet has

²¹ Jon W. Anderson, “The Internet and Islam’s New Interpreters,” p. 50.

become the medium for the dissemination of interactive, communicative, and discursive Islam altogether.

The internet has apparently outshone the significance of print materials for disseminating religious discourses and practices. In fact the strength of the internet lies in its fastness and flexibility, not least for providing opportunities for alternative expressions, networking, and interpretations that draw on and extend its techniques. Additionally, the Internet is worldwide in its reach and rooted in a professional class not yet so widely represented but uniquely positioned to leverage the techniques to reshape the public sphere of Islam. The process is emerging, and absolute numbers are small. The extent and techniques which they bring out is significant. Initially, they joined others' mobilizing discussions from rather private to public space that media makes accessible, and ultimately creates. However, they gradually reshape that space and what publicness means. Moreover, the internet has bolstered a sense of convivial urbanism that has been diminishing with the physical and social transformations toward post-modern, ultra-privatized and socially fragmented urbanism.

Facilitated by the advancement of mobile phone technology, the so-called "Cellular Quran" recently came to offer a service for listening to recitation of certain Qur'anic verses and their interpretation and wisdom that can be explored from them. There is also a mobile dictionary of Islam called "Islamic pocket" which facilitates its bona vide users with practical information about Islam. Cellular Qur'an provides service for those like to listen Qur'anic verses and to learn their meaning through cellular communication technology. Cellular Qur'an was introduced on 15 July 2002 by Craig Abdurrahim Owensby, a former American Protestant cleric who converted to Islam. Owensby runs PT Spotcast, IT Company operating in the application of the internet technology. In collaboration with Aa Gym's Manajemen Qalbu Corporation, he set up Cellular Qur'an. This innovative service enables Muslim professionals who are preoccupied with business activities to listen and learn the meaning of Qur'anic verses. Cellular Qur'an uses different kinds of mobile technology operators, including Telkomsel, Satelindo, Exelcomindo, and IM3.

Cellular Qur'an coordinates religious celebrities as resource of personalities from whom customers would expect to receive messages. These includes Aa Gym, Arifin Ilham, Ihsan Tanjung, and Didin Hafiduddin. Their short lectures on certain verses of the Qur'an are managed by Cellular Qur'an editorial team led by Owensby himself. Users who like to utilize the service, register via sms or the internet, or directly contact costumer service. They can choose one of the four Ustadhs to share knowledge on certain aspects of Islam. After having registered, they will receive daily religious messages from the Cellular Qur'an. The messages flow into their mobile phone screens every day unless they deregister membership by sending

UNREG message. The messages vary greatly, but generally deal with basic Qur'anic teachings on morality of honesty, sincerity and persistence in facing the hurly-burly of modern cosmopolitan world.

Cellular Qur'an also provides audio service, whereby a costumer may call certain numbers in order to listen to six-minute religious lectures delivered by the religious celebrities on a daily basis. The lectures usually begin with the recitation of Qur'anic verses followed by the interpretation of the verses from that members learn the wisdom of God. This service enables customers to cope with daily problems and entertain their hearts from the boredom of the cosmopolitan life. In so doing, Cellular Qur'an offers "instant Islamic lessons" which complements its users to negotiate their places in urban landscape of Indonesian metropolitan cities.

Conclusion

A new sense of publicness is rapidly expanding throughout the Muslim world, owing to the growth of higher education, the growth of easy travel, and the proliferation of media and means of communication. The proliferation of mass education and communication in particular led to an opening up of the political process and heightened competition for the use of the symbolic language of Islam. As a large segment of diverse Muslims has the opportunity to explain their goals in terms of the normative, globalized language of Islam to make their voices heard in public life, the notion of Islam as dialogue and civil debate is gaining ground.

Keeping pace with the development of the modern denominational principle of volunteerism which informs public rationality, a new sense of piety which emphasizes a personalized Muslimhood gains ground on the landscape of the Indonesian public sphere. The advent of new interactive media has bolstered the growth of new modes of piety to the extent that it outshines radical expressions of political Islam. Alternative to religious fundamentalism, post-Islamist piety appears to be a willingness to work toward self-purification and spiritual manifestation, with a particular emphasis on the ultimate salvation and love for God as well as Prophet Muhammad. At the same time, it polishes Islam with new dimensions of enjoyment and status; it also facilitates the mobility of Islamic faith.

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商業、知識與信仰：現代印尼與漢語穆斯林社群之伊斯蘭化

編者：Nabil Chang-kuan Lin（林長寬）

出版者：國立成功大學文學院多元文化研究中心

電話：(06) 2757575 轉 52650；傳真：(06) 2752453

<http://www.cmcs.ncku.edu.tw/> 電子郵件：2012mncsc@gmail.com

發行者：稻鄉出版社

地址：22041 新北市板橋區漢生東路 53 巷 28 號

電話：(02) 22566844、22514894 傳真：(02) 22564690

郵撥帳號：1204048-1

登記號：局版台業字第四一四九號

印刷者：縉億印刷有限公司

初版：2020 年 10 月

ISBN：978-986-99148-7-1

版權所有 翻印必究

First published in Taiwan in 2020 by

Centre for Multi-cultural Studies

College of Liberal Arts, National Cheng Kung University

No. 1, University Rd, Eastern District Tainan, TAIWAN 701-01

E-mail: 2012mncsc@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.cmcs.ncku.edu.tw>

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ISBN: 978-986-99148-7-1 9 (soft cover)

Cover design by Daw Shiang Publishing Co., Ltd.

Cover photography by Karima Adilla & Daw Shiang Publishing Co., Ltd.

Typeset by Daw Shiang Publishing Co. Ltd.

Printed in Taiwan by Find Company (Hong-Yi)