

Noorhaidi Hasan

Islamic Literatures Of The Millennials

Transmission, Appropriation, and Contestation



PPIM
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PusPIDeP

Noorhaidi Hasan

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**Islamic Literatures of The Millennials:
Transmission, Appropriation, and Contestation**

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Contributors	v
List of Researchers	ix

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Towards Popular Islamism

<i>Noorhaidi Hasan</i>	1
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CHAPTER 2

Reading Lists for Islamic Education in Schools and Universities

<i>Suhadi Cholil</i>	21
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CHAPTER 3

Production of Islam(ist) Discourse in Indonesia:
Revitalisation of Public Islam and Political Muslim

Munirul Ikhwan 47

CHAPTER 4

The Circulation and Transmission of Islamic Literatures:
Availability, Accessibility, and Distribution

Moch. Nur Ichwan 79

CHAPTER 5

The Development of Popular Islamism Literature in Indonesia:
Appropriation, Adaptation, and Genre

Najib Kailani 103

CHAPTER 6

The Local Dynamics of Islamism Literature

Ahmad Rafiq 125

CHAPTER 7

The Flakes of Alternative Narratives

Ibnu Burdah 149

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion: The Failure of Jihadism Within the Millennials

Noorhaidi Hasan 189

Bibliography 199

Preface

The collective effort to produce this book began from an instantaneous decision by the end of our research on the millennials' Islamic literatures, which is part of Convey Indonesia's program initiated by Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta along with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This thematically relevant and interesting research had too much potential to be wasted only on mere reports and policy briefs, especially for scholars with strong interest in diffusing knowledge. Therefore, the associated parties of this research project, i.e. UIN Sunan Kalijaga Graduate Department, Pusat Pengkajian Islam, Demokrasi dan Perdamaian (PusPIDeP) Yogyakarta, Project Management Unit (PMU) CONVEY and PPIM Jakarta, agreed to turn the research findings into a book. A team of contributors was immediately established to quickly read and analyse the research report and transform it into a ready-to-publish manuscript.

This research began in June 2017 after PMU CONVEY and PPIM Jakarta authorised the proposal submitted by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Graduate Department and PusPIDeP Yogyakarta. To sharpen the proposal and devise research instruments, we organised a workshop by inviting several speakers, i.e. Martin Slama, Hilman Latief, Din Wahid and Saiful Umam. Sixteen locations were identified to represent the nexus between the millennials, high school and college students and Islamism in Indonesia, which included: Medan, Padang, Pekanbaru, Bogor, Bandung, Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Jember, Pontianak, Banjarmasin, Makassar, Palu, Ambon, Denpasar and Mataram. We then identified the map of Islamic literatures that encircled Indonesian millennials in those cities.

The research involved 16 main researchers and 32 local assistant researchers. The main researchers came from different backgrounds belonging to the cluster of Islamic and social studies: Islamic Politics, Urban Muslim Anthropology, Interfaith Study, Al-Quran and Hadiths Study, Middle-East Study, Salafism, Minority Study, and Islamic Law. We deployed 2 researchers to each region--1 main researcher as the person in charge to be assisted by 1 other researcher--as well as 2 local assistant researchers. The overall field research took 3 months to complete. The data finding of each region was processed by the main researcher and then discussed intensively with all researchers in many occasions. To sharpen the analysis, we organised a research-findings workshop, which was attended by several speakers including Fuad Jabali, Ali Munhanif, and Hew Wai Weng. The whole process resulted in 16 research reports from each region plus 16 policy briefs.

The main purpose of this research is to map the Islamic literatures that are distributed to and read by the millennials, particularly high school and college students. Another purpose of this research is to see the acceptance of many different Islamic literatures by several orientation: ideology, genre, approach tendency, style and others among the millennials. We focus on the millennials after considering the fact that they are the very representation of youth generation

whose aspiration, desire and positioning will decide the future of Indonesia.

This research was supposed to be ended in December 2017. However, due to several technical problems and field research dynamics, it was extended for a month and ended in late January 2018. The result of this research was disseminated in 5 cities: Medan, Jakarta, Mataram, Banjarmasin and Yogyakarta, by inviting several speakers such as Prof. Amin Abdullah, Prof. Jamhari Makruf, Inaya Rahkmani, Saiful Umam, Prof. Hasan Asari, Masnun Tahir, Muhammad Nasir, Prof. Mujibburahman, Ali Munhanif, Waryono Abdul Ghafur, Hairus Salim and Nendra Primonik. This dissemination was important, not only to share research findings, but also to obtain feedback from experts, education practitioners, and the society in general. The feedback and input from them became an important consideration in the production of the report and this book.

This volume attempts to aim at the big and thematic idea in regard to the millennials' Islamic literatures based on the rich data and dynamic from each region. The authors were asked to discuss the literature aspect of formal Islam education in high school and college, the discourse it produced, its dissemination and distribution pattern, appropriation and consumption as well as emerging alternative narratives to balance the prevalent Islamist discourse. This book is expected to contribute in reading the transmission, appropriation and contestation of Islamic literatures distributed to and consumed by Indonesian millennials.

I wish to express my gratitude to the 16 researchers who are involved and have dedicated their time and mind for this research. They are Muhammad Yunus (Medan), Euis Nurlaelawati (Padang), Najib Kailani (Pekanbaru), Roma Ulinuha (Bogor), Suhadi & Siti Khodijah Nurul Aula (Bandung) Noorhaidi Hasan (Solo), Suhadi (Yogyakarta), Ibnu Burdah (Surabaya), Munirul Ikhwan (Jember), Sunarwoto (Pontianak), Ahmad Rafiq (Banjarmasin), Moch Nur Ichwan (Denpasar), Rofah Muzakir (Mataram), Nina Mariani Noor (Ambon), Achmad Uzair (Palu) and Fosa Sarassina (Makassar).

I also wish to extend my gratitude to the research assistants who have

worked hard to assist the researchers in completing the arduous field research. I also want to thank the core team of this research project: Suhadi, Najib Kailani, Munirul Ikhwan and Erie Susanty, who are responsible to help me in running this research, plus the support from Imam Mahmudi, Thas Fajarini, Siti Khodijah Nurul Aula, and Khairil Anwar.

Obviously, I want to express my endless appreciation and gratitude to CONVEY Indonesia and PPIM Jakarta who have put their trust in us to act as a partner in the big and phenomenal program titled Convey, *Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia*. Several other names that I would like to mention include Jamhari Ma'ruf, Saiful Umam, Fuad Jabali, Ali Munhanif, Ismatu Ropi, Didin Syafrudin, Din Wahid, and Jajang Jahroni, as well as several staff members of Project Management Unit (PMU) CONVEY Indonesia who have helped us a lot in the technical affairs of this research: Syamsul Tarigan, Ridwansyah, Utami Sandyarani, Jaya Dani Mulyanto, Narsi, Abdalla, Hani Samantha, and other names that I cannot mention one by one.

Last but not least, I would like to express my endless gratitude to the Rector of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Prof. K.H. Dr. Yudian Wahyudi, who always gives his support and provides a stimulating academic atmosphere for us to complete this research and produce the book that you are now reading. I also wish to thank Deputy Rector 1, 2 and 3, Prof. Dr. Sutrisno, Dr. Phil. Sahiron Syamsuddin and Dr. Waryono Abdul Ghafur for their support in the development of research activities in the Graduate Department. Happy reading!

Yogyakarta, 20th February 2018

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CHAPTER 8

Conclusion: The Failure of Jihadism Within the Millennials

Noorhaidi Hasan

The vulnerability of Indonesian youth, especially students, to radicalism, extremism and terrorism is closely related to their uncertainty in dealing with structural problems and the future. The expansion of communication technology triggered by the rise of the internet has collapsed spatial and social distances, which eventually increases their uncertainty. The impact of this change is obviously felt by the millennial generation. Born in the last 25 years, they grew under the dominance of digital culture that intersects closely with the spread of instant consumption patterns and lifestyles. This generation is used to simplifying the complexity of this world into their easily-clickable smartphones that can find practically anything they need. Frustration can be easily encountered when the virtual world is often different from the realities they face on day-to-day basis.

In this very uncertain situation, millennial generations have to deal with the massive influence of Islamist ideology that offer them hopes

and dreams about change. Built upon narratives that put emphasise on the return to the fundamental basic of Islam and the virtue of early generation of Muslim, they attempt to put a distance and demarcation between Islam and the open society which is depicted as being full of sin, infidelity and westernisation. The failure to put such distance is often claimed as the cause for the downfall of Muslim community compared to the political, economic and cultural domination of the secular West. Islamic Empire is echoed as the key to return Islam's glory. Despite being utopic, Islamist ideology is apparently attractive due its capability in offering a 'coherent' and 'effective' reading on the many contemporary issues as well as framed in a way that represent marginalised people in a fight against the unjust.

The role of Islamic literatures in the flourishing Islamist ideology among students is very significant. In general, Islamist ideology infiltrates through religious reading books that is used by students. In fact, literatures that offer Islamist ideology – centered on the demand of total implementation of Islamic value in every aspect of life that leads to a desire to replace the entire democratic system of nation-state by using violence, if necessary – is very prominent in high school and college environment in Indonesia. The main target is obviously students who are perceived as a potential recruit that can sustain the further spread of the ideology. Many Islamist books, references, and magazines are easily accessible to them, offering them a world view on Islam and the world. In terms of their contents, approach, ideological orientation and proposed narrative, those books can be categorised into Jihadi, Tahriri, Tarbawi, Salafi and Popular Islamism books.

Those literatures were produced by many publishers who are affiliated to Islamist organisation that flourishes in many cities of Indonesia. Solo is the city with the most active publishers for Islamism literature, followed by Yogyakarta, Jakarta and Bogor. In this context, the role of agency should not be ignored. There is a parallel relationship between the growth of Islamism

literature production in a city and the growth of Islamism movement in that city.

Solo is the main host for many publishers and bookstores such as Jazera, Arafah, Aqوام, Al Qowam, and Gazza Media, which have connection with Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki and which are active in producing jihadism books in Indonesia. Era Adicita Intermedia publisher who often publishes Tarbawi books is also headquartered in Solo. The same is also true for Al-Ghuroba, Zamzam, and al-Qalam that all publish Salafi books. The counterparts to Salafi Publishers does exist in other cities, such as Al-Qamar Media (Yogyakarta), Pustaka Ibnu Umar (Bogor), Pustaka Pustaka At-Taqwa (Bogor), Darul Haq (Jakarta) Pustaka Imam Adz-Dzahabi (Bekasi), Pustaka Imam asy-Syafi'i (Bekasi), and Risalah Ilmu (Cibubur). Meanwhile, Yogyakarta has the Pro-U Media publisher that is connected to the Jogokaryan Mosque known to be active in producing Tarbawi literature of many genres, including the popular ones. In Jakarta and Bogor there are Al-Fatih Press and Khilafah Press, both of which are active in producing Tahriri books. In other cities, including those outside of Java, sometimes there are local publishers that procure works written by local authors and distribute them to limited audience.

From the publishers mentioned above, Islamism literature reach the millennials through the help of intermediate actors that include distributors, agencies, shop owners, merchants, organisers of book discussions and book fairs, figures of Islamic movement, and missionary activists. They distribute Islamic books through networks of distribution agents and certain bookstores that display them on their strategic book shelves. Periodically, networks of agents, distributors, merchants and bookstores will hold an Islamic Book Fair to attract wider audience. Within those book fairs, visitors will be able to access, not only the books they want to buy, but also the many events of book launching and discussion as well as meet-and-greet or talkshow sessions with the authors.

The development of digital culture has shift the consumption pattern

of the millennials in consuming Islamic literatures--from printed books to online books. Nowadays, they prefer to access Islamic texts through the internet. Many of them also access those texts through the apps in their smartphone, such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Line and Whatsapp. In understanding this shift, many publishers began to produce digital Islamic literatures, although they still produce the printed version.

In order to market their products, many distribution agencies and bookstores are not reluctant to collaborate with Rohis and LDK activists who are responsible to organise Islamic mentoring, Islamic study groups, *halaqah*, *daurah*, *liqa'*, *mabit* and other Islamic activities. The demand from LDK and Rohis students to Islamic literatures is quite high due to their programs that are mostly accompanied with the obligation to master several key Islamic literatures. Some members are even encouraged to read at least 5 pages a day. Many students are happy to learn about religion through mentoring or *liqa'* and *halaqah* methods, due the capability of the *murabbi* to better communicate with their mentees – often informally. The high demand from students to certain books certainly encourages Rohis and LDK activists to organise book discussions featuring book authors.

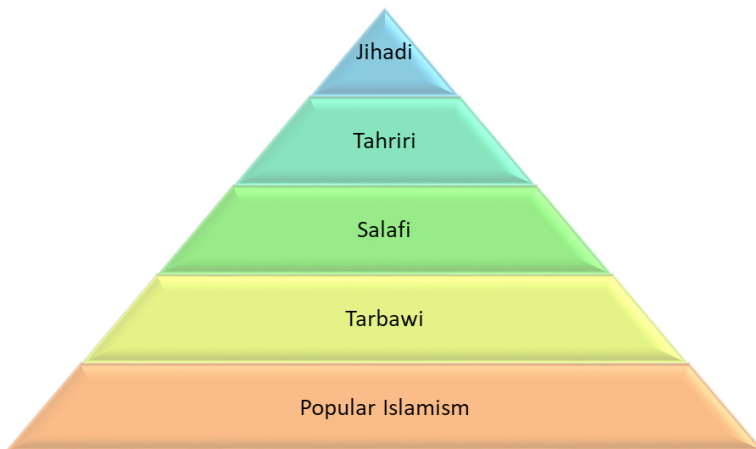
In response to the widespread popularity of Islamism literature with its many variants, the government through its ministry has made several breakthroughs, including the publication of a standardised Islamic education textbook for high school students titled *Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti*. Based on the 2013 curriculum, the book attempts to present a more “moderate-progressive” Islamic material by emphasising on character education. Although some of its contents are a bit vague, such as regarding figures of Islam’s revival and gender equality, the messages about tolerance and anti-radicalism and anti-violence are very prominent. This book became the main reference for many high school students in Indonesiawho are no longer attracted to classical Islamism texts such as the works of Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Abul A’la al-Mawudid and Ayatullah Khomeini. In

Madrasah Aliyah, the situation is not much different. The books used as the main textbooks for class sessions are mainly published by the Ministry of Religion whose goal is “to preserve the peace and harmony among religious communities,” as stated by the Director General of Islamic Education in the books’ prefaces. However, there are still some gap between dreams and reality. The chapter “How Beautiful My Life is if We are All Tolerant to Each Other,” for example, although it quotes many verses and hadiths that support tolerance, it still appears to be emphasising on the risk of building interfaith relations. The problem regarding caliphate is also discussed in the twelfth-grader fiqh books in order to enrich the student’s knowledge of history. The emphasis is still on the historical aspect of the caliphate system; this certainly will be a problem for students who are not equipped with adequate explanation and contextualisation.

A different picture can be observed in regards to the book *Pendidikan Agama Islam Bagi Mahasiswa* published by Kemenristek-Dikti (2016) that provides topics of how human develops their faith to God, how the religion guarantees happiness, a perfect human, a Quranic paradigm, contextualizing Islam in Indonesia, how Islam builds unity and diversity, how Islam faces the challenges of modernisation, the role and function of campus mosques in the development of Islamic culture, as well as *zakat* and taxes. However, the book, which is officially distributed by the Director General of Learning and Student Affairs of Kemenristek-Dikti, has failed to place itself as the main reference for Islamic Education courses in university level. Instead, lecturers are encouraging their students to read the lecturers’ own works or modules. Otherwise, students will seek classical Islamic books available in the market, such as *Dasar-Dasar Agama Islam: Buku Teks Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Perguruan Tinggi Umum* by Zakiah Daradjat, et al. (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang), *Pendidikan Agama Islam: Upaya Pembentukan Pemikiran dan Kepribadian Muslim* by Muhammad Alim (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya), and *Pendidikan Agama Islam* by Toto

Suryana Af, et al. (Bandung: Tiga Mutiara).

Even so, the gap for Islamism literature to penetrate is still quite open, which will influence the aspiration and perspective of the students. It is still quite open not only due to the uncertain direction of Islamic education in Indonesia as well the stakeholder's lack of trust to those Islamic education books--especially in university level, but also due to its over-emphasis on morality issues and character building. The latter reason can actually increase youth's uncertainty that is exacerbated by the issue of 'moral panic' as a result of widespread promiscuity, misuse of drugs and other youth-related antics. They will then attempt to hide behind a fortress in order to plunge deep in Islamic literatures which give strong messages about moral decadence in the community as a result of secular western culture expansion or contemporary world that is depicted as a sinful place filled to the brim with *bid'ah* and infidelity, which can only be dealt with by applying Sharia. Otherwise, they will look for literatures with a lighter ideological tone but still emphasise on character building, morality and piety. This is where literatures of Jihadi, Tahriri, Salafi, Tarbawi, and Popular Islamism found an entrance to infiltrate the mind of students.



The Pyramid of Islamic Literatures' Hierarchy

Although very limited in number and scope, Jihadi literature – which depicts the world as constantly being in a total war due to the ignorance to the absolute divine sovereignty and thus requires the Muslim community to wage jihad wherever they are – is a significant part of the map of Islamic literatures in Indonesia. Among the most popular jihadi books are *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* by Abdullah Azzam and *Jihad Jalan Kami* by Abdul Baqi Ramdhun. The two books were published by Jazera and Era Intermedia, both were a publisher headquartered in Solo. In addition to the two books, *Kepada Aktivits Muslim* by Najih Ibrahim and published by Aqwam in Solo is also accessed and read by some students in several cities of Indonesia.

The Tahriri literature follows suit and is successful – in a wider scope than jihadi literature – to spread their influence among students. The idea of caliphate revival, emphasised by those literatures as a method to return to the glory day of Islam, seems to be effective in convincing students that the uncertain situation they experienced was the result of an unjust system. Example for this type of literature includes the translated version of Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani and Abdul Qadim Zallum's books.

Recently, Hizbut Tahrir activists or their sympathisers have managed to adopt and appropriate Tahriri ideas into a more simple and appropriate languages relatable to the Muslim youth these days. Some of the example includes Felix J. Siauw's books. He is a popular author and ustadz who have many youth followers and very active in social media. Two of his books, *Beyond the Inspiration* and *Muhammad Al-Fatih 1453*, which was published by Al-Fatih Press, have been read and distributed in Islamic mentoring groups whether in high school or university level. The two books also inspire a young author by the name of Sayf Muhammad Isa to write a trilogy novel titled *The Chronicles of Draculesti* that presents Al-Fatih as a hero who fights against darkness in the Europe. The appearance of this novel is a sign for the dynamic intersection between global pop cultures and Islamism ideas.

Salafi literature has also garnered significant attention among students,

even more prominently than Tahriri literature. Salafi literature is attractive to the students since it is able to create a demarcation between the contemporary world depicted as being filled to the brim with sin and infidelity and the ideal world believed to provide salvation and certainty. Those books also offer a foundation to claim an identity and authenticity in practicing religion, since it has strong reference to Islam's main sources of information. Examples of Salafi literature aimed at students are the translation of Aidh al-Qarni's books, such as *La Tahzan* and *Pelajar Berprestasi*, both were published by Qisthi Press. The more classical Salafi literature, such as the works of Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyah, or even the more contemporary Salafi literature written by Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Muhammad Salih al-Usaimin, are also widely circulated among students.

Compared to Salafi literature, Tarbawi books that have a mission to spread the ideology of Muslim Brotherhood – who desires for a change to the established political system – are more widely accepted by students. The growth of Tarbawi literature in Indonesia is aligned with the development of Tarbiyah movement in universities that transformed into a political party (PK-PKS) during late 90s. Meanwhile, early Tarbiyah literature includes translated works written by Muslim Brotherhood figures, such as Hasan Al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Sayyid Hawwa. Especially during the 1980s and 1990s, these books were well circulated and read by students who were active in study groups and *halaqah* in campus. In today's context, the most consumed Tarbawi literature are books that appropriate the ideological missions of al-Banna, Qutb and Hawwa into messages of a gradual change, namely by first planting morality and commitment to Islamic practices. Examples include Salim A. Fillah's work; *Jalan Cinta Para Pejuang, Saksikan Aku Seorang Muslim, dan Dalam Dekapan Ukhwah* and Solikhin Abu Izzudin's work titled *Zero to Hero: Mendahsyatkan Pribadi Biasa Menjadi Luar Biasa* and *New Quantum Tarbiyah: Membentuk Kader Dahsyat Full Manfaat*.

It is important to be noted that while Tahriri, Salafi and Tarbawi literatures were able to gain audience to some degree, jihadism literature appears to fail significantly. Though still quite available, its influence is limited to groups that interact intensively with Jihadis movements or institutions. This is due to the fact that Jihadi literature is offering a black and white choice to the youth and force them to follow their dangerous code of ethics. The attempt by the government to wage wars against terrorism, supported by the power of civil society, has definitely contributed to the failure of Jihadi literature's expansion. More importantly, Salafi figures have also made some books that delegitimise Jihadi ideology. One example is Lukman Ba'abduh's *Mereka adalah Teroris*, which was written as a response to Imam Samudra's justification for the Bali Bombing.

In dealing with the widespread influence of Islamism literature, the millennials appear to be capable of selecting, adapting, and appropriating it due to their consumption culture. They are not easily swayed by certain ideological influence, especially those ideologies who force them to choose between a black and white decision. Instead, students are seeking literature that can understand their desire and cultural identity, as well as that which offers solutions to their daily problems and ways to build confidence in facing today's challenges.

It is within this context that popular Islamic books and magazines that contain themes of everyday life are gaining acceptance among students. Its influence is the most widespread compared to the Islamism literature mentioned above. Despite being inserted with ideological messages, popular Islamism literature can deliver those messages in an easy-to-digest and trendy language; moreover, it can also offer practical guidance for the Muslim community in dealing with their problems (*ready-to-use* Islam). This kind of literature is presented in genres of fiction, popular writing and comics. They provide short narratives in simple languages without patronizing, and are accompanied with attractive illustrations. As such,

they can easily penetrate the millennials's mind since they can answer their dilemmas and problems.

Books categorised as popular Islamism are very diverse, from novels like *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa: Perjalanan Menapak Jejak Islam Eropa* by Hanum Salsabiela Rais; *Ayat-ayat Cinta, Ketika Cinta Bertasbih, Api Tauhid* by Habiburrahman el-Shirazy; *Negeri 5 Menara* by A. Fuadi; and some Tere Liye's works like *Hapalan Shalat Delisa*, to motivational books like *La Tahzan for Hijabers* by Asma Nadia, *La Tahzan Untuk Para Pencari Jodoh* by Riyadus Shalihin Emka, *La Tahzan for Jomblo* by Nasukha Ibnu Thobari and *Man Shabara Zhafra: Success in Life with Persistence*, by Ahmad Rifai Rif'an. Felix Siauw's works are also significant, such as *Udah Putusin Aja!* and *Yuk Berhijab!*, which are categorised into popular Islamism literature. The same is also true for Sayf Muhammad Isa's *The Chronicles of Draculesti*, which was inspired by Felix Siauw's *Beyond the Inspiration* and *Muhammad Al-Fatih 1453*. The existence of the novels that present Al-Fatih as the hero who fights against the darkness in Europe shows a very dynamic intersection between global pop culture and Islamism ideas.

It should be underlined that, although Islamism literature is continuously produced in many genres, moderate Islamic texts also persist and continue being developed. In responding to the widespread influence of alternative Islamism, Indonesian Muslims are able to produce alternative Islamic books. These alternative texts include Islamic textbooks that revitalise mainstream Islamic teaching, if not traditional, moderate and progressive Islamic books, and counter-narrative books made for de-radicalisation program. As such, the hope for the future of moderate Indonesian Islam, which strongly commits to Indonesian values and is friendly to diversity, is still reliable at least by looking at the widespread distribution of alternative Islamic texts amidst the onslaught of Islamism literature in Indonesia's public space.

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