Public morality and the transformation of Islamic media in Indonesia

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Introduction

The growth of media in post-authoritarian Indonesia is the result of greater press freedom established by President B.J. Habibie in 1999. Despite strict media censorship, the use of the internet in Indonesia since the mid-1990s opened up an alternative source of information for the public, especially for Suharto’s opponents (Sen 2011, pp. 1–2). All segments of the media community, including Islamic media, have moved rapidly towards more diversity and plurality, freed from the past constraints of state censorship and propaganda. The practices and symbols of Islam in the post-Suharto era are very much represented in both print, electronic, and digital mass mediated forms. This phenomenon has shaped the Indonesian socio-cultural landscape by moving it in a more Islamic direction. Islamic values and symbols are reinforced in the public sphere, and are more visible and gendered than before. In my view, the development of modern Islamic media in Indonesia is in accordance with the spirit of revivalist Islam, which promotes Islamic piety, rather than political Islam. Revivalist Islam refers to a context where Islam is manifested through expansive piety movements characterized by populist support for Islamic virtues and striking obedience towards Islamic doctrines (Lapidus 2002, p. 823). Revivalist Islam not only includes pious movements characterized by passive and apolitical spiritualism, it also resonates with radical and militant transnational Islamic movements (Hrair 1980, pp. 2–3).

To go back in time, the development of the printing industry and mass press enabled Islamic sacred texts to be publicly accessible in the early 19th century, which in turn catalyzed the production of Islamic publications (Feener 2007, pp. 7–8). Historically, Islamic activism in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon. It existed in the colonial period and expanded in the postcolonial era. In the Indonesian colonial context, the Islamic press also helped to awaken the national conscience and shape the nationalist movement. In the postcolonial era, the Islamic press were inclined to support the establishment of a political constituency in the form of a nation-state. It also mediated fears about the polarization of global power during the Cold War years between the competing ideologies of capitalism and socialism, as Sukarno tended towards socialist ideas. The Masyumi (Majelis Syuro
Indonesia or the Council of Indonesian Muslim Association), a major Islamic political party during the 1950s liberal democracy in Indonesia, contributed to this evolution. However, the party was banned in 1960 by President Sukarno following allegations of involvement in a coup, weakening the popularity of Masyumi and its publications. Despite the dismantling of the Masyumi party and Sukarno’s preference for secularist leftist groups, as well as active repression policies regarding ‘superstitious’ types of religion, Islam was still considered an important resource for building the national character. In this period, non-partisan Islamic media tended to echo Sukarno’s political agenda for consolidating nationalism and the critique of neocolonialism as expressed by the ‘Non-Aligned Movement’ founded in Bandung in 1955. During the political turmoil of 1965 which led to the elimination of the Indonesian Communist Party and the massacre of communist sympathizers, mass media, including the Islamic press, came under strict political scrutiny. Despite political pressures on mass media under the following Suharto regime, the industry for popular culture grew as the government shifted to a western model of industrialization and a market system for the first time. Robert Hefner (1997) emphasizes that a vast market of Islamic books, magazines, and newspapers started to develop in the late 1970s, while mosques proliferated in Indonesian towns and villages. During Suharto’s New Order regime, political Islam was restricted, as the regime promoted secular development programs similar to those employed during Sukarno’s rule. However, the government helped to promote Islamic piety in order to gain political support, especially from Islamic communities after some disputes with particular Islamic groups that ended in mass demonstrations, for instance in the case of a growing demand to regulate marriage laws in the 1970s (Pamungkas 2015).

Andrew Weintraub (2011) argues that mass mediated forms of Islam have played a key role in the Islamization process in Indonesia. Amidst political changes, revivalist Islamic media are defined as seeking a balance between the market expansion of religious commodities and Islam. Shifting away from the state-centric strategies of political Islam, Islamic revivalism seeks to popularize and disseminate certain forms of Islamic teachings in order to reinforce Islamic values and practices that converge around the idea of an Islamized public morality (Pamungkas 2015). Since the diversity of Islamic media in Indonesia also represents the variety of Islamic organizations, it is important to locate their various interests with regard to their entanglements with the state. Concerns with public morality also become the focus of competing political interests that challenge the legitimate political authority (i.e. the state). This has been particularly the case in the post-Suharto era and the return, in 1998, to liberal democracy and the deregulation of the media sphere. With regard to the transformation of Islamic media in modern Indonesia, this chapter provides a study of Islamic media as an inseparable part of da’wa, with public morality as a central issue. Moreover, this chapter specifically discusses how particular themes related to public morality are generated by Islamic activism in particular historical contexts.

**Theoretical frameworks: identity politics, popular culture, and the commodification of Islam**

*Da’wa* is translated as the ‘proselytization of Islam,’ ‘issuing a summons’ or ‘making an invitation.’ For many Islamic groups and organizations, *da’wa* is reimagined and articulated into commodified forms directed not only at religious self-healing and personalized forms of worship and practice but also towards generating social and political changes. Unlike the piety movement established in many traditional Muslim rural areas, which includes traditional forms of Sufism, the Islamic piety movement in Indonesia emerged from the
Muslim urban middle classes over the course of the 20th century. The motivation to become ‘better Muslims’ has encouraged Muslim middle classes to upgrade their understanding and practices of Islam through study with a new class of religious authorities. These authorities range from scholars at state tertiary institutions and universities, to self-tutored lay scholars with backgrounds in other fields like religious education, media (particularly TV and radio), and culture (Howell 2010, pp. 284–285). Most Islamic media label themselves as da’wa, which acts to label their activities as Islamic and provides a frame for their mission. The content of da’wa media aims to reinforce public morality, as the case of the role of such media in the debates leading to the introduction of the Pornography Law in 2008 illustrates. Da’wa missions involve public campaigns for Islamized and conservative moral and ethical standards and the promotion of personal discipline, and often involve the production of ‘moral panic’ around sensitive issues. Public morality issues are commonly justified through the religious obligation of amr makruf nahi munkar, or commanding the right and forbidding the wrong (see also Khalifa’s contribution in this volume). Literature about identity politics and popular culture have been successfully invested as part of this da’wa mission. It proposes religious messages as self-help resources in order to apply Islamic principles to everyday life and promote piety as a pillar of Muslim identity.

In her own work on media, Birgit Meyer (2009) points out that religious media propose ‘aesthetic formations’ which connect imagination and virtues. Through viewing or reading, an audience participates and in many cases identifies with a ‘shared style’ that opens up spaces of imagination in which the subject can transpose her or himself at the same time that it integrates them into socio-religious formations. In this respect, aesthetic formations compose social formations in which the process of forming subjects merges with the making of a community (Meyer 2009, p. 3). Audiences are not purely innocent or passive actors, as modern media is active in the creation of societies and identities (Kellner 1995, p. 30). Consumers at this point have the power to alter popular culture in a cultural display of contested meanings and social values. This perspective helps to explain the motivation among Indonesian urban middle class Muslims to pursue an identity as better Muslims, because engaging with the da’wa mission and interactive media provides a vector for identity, questions of ethics (how to live), as well as creating imaginary bonds between like-minded and like-aspiring people, and therefore a sense of belonging and markers of community. They also provide a sense of spiritual immediacy; it is a form of religious action in its own right (see Howell 2010, p. 294).

To get an understanding of how social formations are shaped by Islamic media, Eickelman and Anderson (2003) suggest the concept of ‘Muslim public spheres’ to account for the way in which, in Muslim majority countries, a new sense of the public is shaped by open contests over the authoritative use of the symbolic language of Islam. The rapid access to contemporary forms of communication makes it possible for Muslims to build up social connections and constituencies. In fact, new technological forms of communication have enabled a modern sense of religious and political identity that extends across trans-local horizons (Eickelman and Anderson 2003, p. 9). The notable rise in the practice of veiling for women in public can be linked to advancements in the media. It appears both as the product of intense media activity and a form of media in itself, as it is blended in with fashion and invests the public space as a symbol that is tied to the intertextuality of media discussions, publicity, opinions, and contestations. While veil wearing is not traditional in Indonesia, it is not something completely new. What is new is how the veil has become part of a self-expressive way to affirm oneself as modern for middle-class Muslims. What is modern here is that Islamic piety is coupled with a sense of cosmopolitanism and fashion.
that simultaneously makes a claim of piety. What is striking here is the blending of ‘Islam’ (reference to a transcendent or sacred belief) and popular culture (that is considered commercial or secular) through consumerism, that is fashion and the conspicuous commodification of Islamic symbols in everyday Muslim lives. Through these dynamics, veil wearing participates in the production of the Muslim public sphere (Brennen 1996; Jones 2007).

The concept of the Muslim public sphere illustrates how Muslims build their understanding of Islam and share ideas about it across physical, cultural, and geographic boundaries. This is made possible through the fact that media allows for the visualization of ideas, which can be rapidly shared and duplicated and become a strategic part of Islamic da’wa (e.g., Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Salvatore and Levine 2005; Hirschkind 2006). The mediatization of Islamic da’wa practices includes narratives about Islam drawn from the Qur’an, and also other narratives which explain other forms of Islamic piety that Muslims find relevant to their daily life. Da’wa strategies make use of symbols, references, and rhetorical devices that use a language of Islam that is familiar to Indonesian Muslims and therefore acculturates and grounds global and transnational trends in the local culture.

In the current development of Islamic media in Indonesia, Islamism has become a particularly influential ideology that values visible Islamic signs, piety, and an assiduous religiosity. Since the start of the 21st century, Islamic piety as promoted by Islamism has become omnipresent in the Muslim public sphere through commodified and mass mediated forms such as tele-preachers and Islamic-themed feature films. The Islamist cultural movement influenced by the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood of Ikhwanul Muslimeen-Salah’s (ikhwanisi) teachings in Indonesia initially began in the 1970s during the Suharto New Order period and expanded throughout the archipelago in the 1990s through networks of campus da’wa activists, including in some of the leading secular state universities in Indonesia. The movement translated the major ikhwanisi texts from Arabic into Indonesian and created an underground network for the circulation of Islamic publications. A consequence has been the adoption of ikhwanisi-derived Arabic terminologies into Indonesian with respect to various bodily practices and discipline. The term hijrah, which refers to strict veiling rules, is a notable example of a notion that has spilled out from the tarbiyah movement into the general public. Paradoxically, the New Order restrictions on political Islam, followed by the depoliticization of the secular campuses in Indonesia in the 1970s, had a greater impact on forming da’wa practices than official political recruitment. By shifting from outright politics into popular culture, book promotion, mediated religious sermons, and especially private religious education were key to the recruitment of da’wa activists during this period.

The increasing commodification of Islam in contemporary Indonesia is also due in large measure to the socio-economic, technological, and cultural changes that have taken place in recent decades, driving the pursuit of moral certainty, spiritual enrichment, and piety as an identity (Fealy 2008, p. 16). The increasing commodification of Islam can also be identified as a result of the combined thrust of neoliberalism and consumerism. The effects of neoliberalism have been important in Indonesia regarding structural economic and political changes as well as state regulation more generally, for instance the deregulation of the media starting in the 1990s. As for consumerism, it emerged progressively in the 1970s and accompanied the formation of a new middle class in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to the ‘Asian Tigers’ economic crisis. This penetration of consumerism in Indonesian society has been accompanied by an acculturated version of what Charles Taylor calls the modern individualistic culture of authenticity, which promotes an expressive self (Taylor 1991). François Gauthier, Tuomas Martikainen, and Linda Woodhead have argued that religion has been globally reshaped within the framework of a Market type of regulation through the
combined pull of neoliberalism and consumerism in particular, and the rise in importance of economics over all other social spheres in general (Gauthier et al. 2013a, 2013b; Gauthier 2014). In a recent book, Gauthier (2020) has applied this framework to the case of Indonesia, showing how media and consumerism are essential variables to consider for understanding recent religious changes in this country. The history of Islamic media and the particular destinies of da’wa missions examined in this chapter exemplify the shift from a political and state-centric type of regulation to a consumerism-driven and expressive Market one over the course of the last decades, and the consequent rise in importance of culture and social practices in the formation of a Muslim public sphere.

My aim in linking the concepts of identity politics, popular culture, and the commodification of Islam is to provide an analysis of how Islamic media in contemporary Indonesia have generated a Muslim public by focusing on selected themes related to ‘public morality.’ I turn to debates that led to the adoption of the 2008 Pornography Law and the 2016 blasphemy case involving a non-Muslim political figure to illustrate these dynamics. Through these examples, I argue that neoliberalism and consumerism have had a profound impact that has shaped the ways in which Islamic moral codes have been produced, promoted, and appropriated on the whole of the political spectrum (see Fischer 2008; Rudnychcki 2009; Gauthier and Martikainen 2013a).

**Da’wa strategies of public morality: the case of women’s magazines**

In the 20th century, during the colonial period and the birth of Indonesia as a nation-state, the Islamic press disseminated content about practicing worship, but also the interpretation of Islam regarding the social, economic, and political conditions of society as a whole, in what can be called the emergence of Islamic modernity in Indonesia. The foundation of the Sjarekat Islam (1911) and Muhammadiyah (1912) movements aimed through their publications to contribute in the transformation of traditional Muslim society into a fully modern one, namely through the reform of Islam in accordance with the principles of state sovereignty and its corollary, nationalism (Masud 2009, pp. 259–260). Claims of a ‘global Islamic revivalism’ started to emerge in the 1930s and became a source of resistance to colonialism, buttressed by the establishment of a transnational network of Muslim scholars. The da’wa strategy then aimed at constructing a sense of Muslim identity geared towards the suppression of colonialism. One finds an example of such ideas in the first Islamist magazine *Madjalah Pembela Islam* (*The Islamic Defender Magazine*) published by Ahmad Hassan and influenced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Feener 2007, pp. 10–14; Pamungkas 2017). Following Sukarno’s authoritative turn in the wake of the 1955 elections, this brand of political Islam was seen as problematic, leading to the dismantlement of the Masyumi party, in spite of the cultural legitimation it could provide to resistance against neocolonialism in the Cold War era (Madinier 2015; Pamungkas 2017).

Similarly, the transition from Sukarno to Suharto was characterized by the establishment of a tight control over media and any criticism against the government. It included restrictions and state censorship of mass media, including the Islamic press. Although former Masyumis’ publications like the *Panji Masyarakat* magazine and *Abadi* newspaper were republished in the early days of the New Order by former Masyumi activists, both publications were banned again by the Suharto regime after the Malari incident in 1974. Both publications criticized the New Order government for embracing a free market system and allowing Japanese investments in Indonesia. Due to political scrutiny during the New Order, many Masyumi activists led by Mohammad Natsir avoided a direct confrontation...
with Suharto, paving the way for an alternative method of *da’wa* propagation through cultural activities. Natsir established a non-political organization that officially functioned as part of the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII) *da’wa* mission in the early 1970s. The DDII established relations with several non-governmental organizations in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Although the DDII promoted literature associated with political Islam, which it translated into Indonesian, the material was not easily accessible by the public during the New Order period. However, it was through such efforts that the DDII successfully generated a network of young *da’wa* activists in several leading secular campuses through their cultural *da’wa* activities (van Bruinessen 2002). The New Order government presumed that the *da’wa* activities were cultural, not political, and this inaugurated a new type of transnational *da’wa* activism that later became known as the Tarbiyah movement (Pamungkas 2015). The Arabic word *tarbiyah* is literally translated as ‘education.’ In fact, the *da’wa* movement combined its views on political Islam with mentoring techniques and thus created a hierarchical societal structure based on the members’ knowledge of Islam and their apprenticeship in mentoring sessions. Following the demise of Suharto, the Islamist *da’wa* party PKS (the Justice and Prosperous party) was established in 1998.

In the New Order era, material promoting political Islam was disallowed from public representation. On the other hand, the New Order regime began to open up a vast sphere for the practice and discourse of Islamic piety in the 1990s. The Suharto regime began to embrace certain liberal Muslim scholars and allowed the establishment of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association (ICMI) in order to benefit from their support in a period when its legitimacy, namely within the military, was eroding. Since the New Order era, Islamic media (magazines and newspapers) have tended to promote personal piety and also serve as a medium to campaign for government-related programs. *Amanah*, a popular Islamic women’s magazine, and *Republika*, a newspaper affiliated with the ICMI, are two examples. The fall of the New Order in 1998 also contributed to the decline of the nationalist discourse in popular Islamic media. Rather, it is the Islamic media who have subscribed to transnational Islamic ideologies that have enjoyed widespread public circulation, namely due to the state’s deregulation of its control over Islamism, as a side-effect of neoliberal policies and the rise of market logics in the post New Order era.

Nevertheless, Islamist political journals like *Sabili*, *Tarbawi*, *Saksi*, *Ummi* and *Amanah* were born at the peak of the Suharto period as underground (and therefore illegal) publications. They presented themselves as radical Islamic media emphasizing the importance of *jihad*. However, only *Ummi* has survived until today. This is because *Ummi* (literally meaning ‘my Mother’) has successfully transformed itself from a radical *jihadist* women’s magazine into a popular Islamist magazine with fashion and lifestyle pages and ‘People’ type content. This transformation was influenced by the impact of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and the Bali bombings that same year, namely the polemics and disputes among Muslims in Indonesia on the definition of the true meaning of *jihad*. *Ummi* is an interesting case study of the survival of a popular Islamist magazine that has adopted the pop style of a modern women’s magazine and a fully consumerized identity.

The significant influence of *Ummi*’s efforts to push the political agenda of the Islamist party PKS is evidenced by the magazine’s role in the establishment of the Pornography Law in Indonesia in 2008. *Ummi* became the political mouthpiece of the PKS in disseminating discourse about pornographic activities in response to the wide circulation of print materials which featured mostly photographs of ‘naked women’ and texts about sexual intercourse in the early 2000s. On this account, however, *Ummi*’s concern with public morality not only addressed the issue of pornography (found in mass mediated forms), but aimed to further
strengthen the normative sexual order more widely. This included a rejection of any explicit sensual, intimate, or erotic displays in public. Nudity, especially the full or partial exposure of men’s or women’s external genitals, women’s breasts and buttocks, as well as intimate kissing and any gesture imitating sexual intercourse, was seen as inappropriate. This was conveyed through narratives arguing that a law was needed to address these issues to protect the next generation of Indonesians from moral degradation. The discourse was symbolically associated with an Islamic feminine construct of *Ummu Madrasa* (mother of education), referencing Islamic doctrines that assign women to be the moral protectors of society. The Islamist agenda of situating women as moral gatekeepers is an inseparable part of what is called the *marhalah da’wa*. This refers to five strategic phases of *da’wa*: achieving self-improvement (*islah an-nafs*); founding an Islamic family (*islah al bait al Muslim*); improving society (*islah al mujtama*); improving governance (*islah al hukumah*); and liberating Muslims from non-Muslim power (*tahrir al watan*). These goals aim in turn to return to the glory of Muslim ethical rules (rules for living) in order to produce and institute the global *Umma*. It is interesting that *Ummi*’s fully commodified and cosmopolitan matrix, with its alluring covers and features, by no means signifies a liberal attitude to sexuality; on the contrary, *Ummi* has proven itself to be an effective medium for propagating the *da’wa* movement’s project to transform public morality through the production of content related to the Islamic sexual normative order. Despite its opaque Islamist political agenda, *Ummi* essentially serves patriarchal capitalism, like many other secular women’s magazines, through the mediatization of commodified and conservative Islamic feminine identities. In this context, media like *Ummi* are actively involved in the re-stylization and commodification of Islamic activism, working towards forms of collective engagement by addressing particular market niches which it converts into putative adhesions to Islamist ideas, practices, and attitudes to morality. This includes arranged marriage programs to create the ideal *Umma* (Islamic polity) as well as other profit-making programs that incorporate *Ummi*’s fandom as cultural intermediaries assigned to advertise the consumption of Islamic goods, services, and leisure products for a larger market. *Ummi* has also proved its ability to cope with technological transformation by proposing a digital platform for its magazine and relaying interactive content and promotions on social media. Today, *Ummi* is the leading Muslim women’s magazine in Indonesia, and its Facebook fan page sported a million subscribers by the end of 2017. *Ummi* magazine is a new icon of pious and capitalist Muslim women.

**Moral panic as *da’wa* strategy**

Another particularly effective strategy of the *da’wa* movement for acting upon public morality issues has been creating what social scientists call ‘moral panic’—a threat to societal values and public concerns (Cohen 1973; McLuhan 1994 [1964])—with respect to certain controversial issues, namely through social media. This is evidenced by the blasphemy case against Christian Governor of Jakarta Basuki Tjahaya Purnama, or Ahok, in 2016, ahead of the early 2017 local elections. The allegations were issued from Islamist groups such as the FPI (the Islamic Defenders Front), a vigilante organization established with support from the Indonesian army in 1998, and the GNPF-MUI (the National Movement of the Fatwas Guard), a collective organization with members from Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and the PKS party, with the support of the MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council). Blasphemy allegations on the part of the Governor made it to public attention after a short video containing an edited version of a speech Ahok gave was published on Facebook by an Islamist social media campaigner, Buni Yani, on October 6, 2016. The edited video showed a section of an
August 2016 public speech in which Ahok cited the Qur’an in support of his critique of the FPI’s support of other candidates. At first, nobody protested Ahok’s speech, including the predominantly local Muslims in the audience. However, the FPI and the GNPF MUI were successful in framing an argument according to which Ahok, as a non-Muslim, had no right to cite the Qur’anic verse and that he sought to deceive Muslims in his bid for re-election as the Governor. The campaign against Ahok went as far as a court case accusing him of blasphemy, which was widely disseminated on social media and popularized through the hashtag #BelaQur’an (Defending the Qur’an). This hashtag, generated by the GNPFI-MUI media center, facilitated access to posts about the blasphemy case that could easily be shared or copied. The media campaign about the blasphemy case eventually coalesced into a social and political movement called ‘the Action to Defend Islam’ that included serial mass protests combined with religious sermons. The largest mass protest, referred to as the 212 Action, took place during the Friday prayer on December 2, 2016 in Jakarta. The movement successfully influenced the court, which found Ahok guilty of blasphemy in April 2017. He eventually lost his position as Jakarta Governor to the hand of his competitor, Anies Baswedan, who benefited from the support of Action to Defend Islam later that spring.

These mass protests also resulted in economic gain for some participants in the movement. For example, the protests helped to establish the ‘Koperasi 212,’ a Shari’a-based economic cooperative that promotes household products sponsored by members of the 212 Action. In this regard, the Islamist groups involved in the movement tried to persuade Muslim communities to develop an alternative economy in support of prihumi businesses, or businesses owned by presumed ‘native’ Muslims, to challenge the dominant role of the Chinese minority in the private sector of the Indonesian economy. Another product of the movement was the installation of tours featuring a series of religious sermons throughout Indonesia, managed by Action to Defend Islam. The religious sermons gave precedence to the call to build ‘the pribumi economy,’ spreading fear of ‘alien’ threats which coalesced anti-Chinese sentiments in Indonesia. In fact, this call was more about boycotting non-Muslim products and Chinese businesses rather than a promotion for the expansion of an ‘Islamic capitalism.’ In other words, the blasphemy case and the Action to Defend Islam movement situated the battle for hegemony over the Indonesian and Muslim public sphere in the media and economic arena, shifting the politics of Islamism away from strictly political to consumerised forms in which subjective appropriations of ‘proper’ Islamic moral codes are married to a capitalist ethic of prosperity.

Conclusion

The Islamic media in Indonesia boasts its Islamic identity and relays its da’wa strategies as a ‘call’ or ‘invitation’ to practice a ‘proper Islam’ through the appropriation and expression of Islamic symbols and partaking in a consumerist Islamist culture. Islamic media in this respect is a powerful actor in the production of a ‘Muslim public sphere’ and the definition of Muslim morality. Through mediatization and consumerization (Gauthier 2020), a Muslim public is created for a ‘market niche’ that organizes around an easily recognizable Islamic identity.

The transformation of Islamic media in Indonesia emphasizes public morality, especially through visible signs of personal piety. The sociological and cultural processes of incorporating da’wa strategies, public morality, and the creation of a Muslim public in contemporary Indonesia exhibit four main types of Islamist rhetoric: (1) the promotion of a formal expressive Islamic identity in the public sphere especially, through popular culture;
(2) the airing of preaching and religious sermons in the mainstream electronic media and the multiplication of social media use. More specifically, popular Islamist media in Indonesia have targeted women and youth as consumers by promoting formal piety and their participation in the Islamic polity referred to as the Umma; (3) the definition and targeting of an oppositional and depreciated ‘other’ (e.g. the Chinese minority) as a critique of inherited pluralism in a multicultural Indonesian society; and (4) opaque political propaganda within religious forms of worship that make use of social media to mobilize masses for supporting particular political interests and partisan constituencies. Such types of Islamist rhetoric are in fact facilitated by the works of cultural intermediaries made possible by the development of the modern media industry and advanced digital technology, which are themselves embedded in capitalist modes of production. Mediated da’wah forms, especially since the start of the 21st century, have functioned not only as a sphere of political contest but also as a ‘display’ and means of promotion of material culture, namely through the presentation of an authentic Islam simultaneously constructed as a modern lifestyle. The mainstream media strategy which consists of inserting personal piety into the public sphere is supported by the provision of an ‘alternative lifestyle’ (to secular models of political modernity) that is legitimized by its appropriation and expression in the daily lives of Indonesian Muslims (see Gauthier 2020).

References


