



CHALLENGING THE MAINSTREAMS: Broadcasting Salafi Da'wah on Indonesian TV Channels

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Abstract: This article examines Salafi da'wah (Islamic proselytizing) movements on private TV stations at the national level. The proliferation of da'wah on private TV in post-Suharto regimes is considered part of the increasing commodification of Islam, which targets middle-class Muslims as a market for economic benefits. The routine appearances of these preachers have shaped alternative religious authority that challenges and competes with the conventional ones from Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah and Islamic education institutions such as *pesantren* or Islamic universities. Since 2010, Salafi da'wah has challenged this by providing da'wah contents that focus on educating Muslims to be more pious. Drawing from participatory observation and in-depth interviews with program producers and other related parties, this article strives to answer how the Salafi da'wah movement attempts to dominate the Islamic public sphere in the country and face competition with other religious authorities through da'wah programs on TV. It is argued that the emergence of the Salafi authority through the da'wah program on TV has challenged the dominance of mainstream da'wah of Nahdlatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah in the Indonesian public sphere.

Keywords: Salafi da'wah, Islamic authority, national TV station, public sphere

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Introduction

DA'WAH ON TV is perceived as the strategy to disseminate Islamic teachings to reach mass audiences by using TV as one of the media platforms. It aims to intensify Muslims' faith and piety to live based on Islamic teachings. It is also used to persuade non-Muslims to convert to Islam. Da'wah for Muslims is part of daily

routines as it is an Islamic obligation to do so. It is conducted in mosques, houses, hotels, and so forth, and can primarily be heard in public spaces.

Public sermons are performed and echoed through microphones in mosques in Indonesia on Friday, where Islamic messages are transferred to the public.¹ Cassette sermons are played in mosques for the public to hear, and they deal with daily matters society faces.² The contents of da'wah are uploaded to the Internet.³ The development of mass media technology in Indonesia and the Muslim world influences the trend of da'wah from conventional strategies to mediated platforms. This also happens in other Muslim countries, such as in Malaysia with the young imam audition,⁴ in Egypt with the broadcast of TV preacher Amr Khalid, in Mali with TV preacher Cherif Haidara, and in Turkey with TV preacher Fethullah Gülen.⁵ Therefore, the broadcast of da'wah on TV is a global trend.

This trend can be seen as part of the 'Islamic resurgence'⁶ where Islam has become more visible and dominant in the public sphere, mediated da'wah platforms, which refer to Muslim organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and

¹ Akh Muzakki, "Islam as a Symbolic Commodity: Transmitting and Consuming Islam through Public Sermons in Indonesia," in *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, 2007.

² Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

³ Eva F. Nisa, "Social Media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018).

⁴ Bart Barendregt and Chris Hudson, "Islam's Got Talent: Television, Performance and the Islamic Public Sphere in Malaysia," in *Lifestyle Media in Asia: Consumption, Aspiration and Identity*, 2016.

⁵ M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, "Islam in Turkey: Retreat from the Secular Path?" in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

⁶ Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 2007.

MUI, provide alternative voices of Islam to more established methods.⁷

On the other hand, the trend of da'wah on TV may also be considered as part of the 'conservative turn' of Indonesian Islam, which changes the images of Indonesian Islam from 'tolerant and inclined to compromise during the Suharto's regimes to intolerant face of Islam marked by violent inter-religious conflict, jihad movement, and a series of simultaneous bombings of churches in 2000, as well as the Bali bombings in 2002 after the fall of Suharto.'⁸ Furthermore, it may be just part of the commodification of Islam for economic purposes.⁹ The trend is also can be viewed as both a conservative turn and the commodification of Islam. As a result of the proliferation of da'wah programs on TV stations, Islamic religious authorities have been fragmented¹⁰ Moreover, it is contested by various institutions and individuals.¹¹

Several scholars, such as Howell, Hoesterey, and Njoto-Feillard, have observed the appearance of TV preachers.¹² Hoesterey asserts that 'he solidified his standing as a national figure during nationally broadcast sermon live from Istiqlal mosque in December 2001 when he was invited before the audience that included ... president Megawati Soekarno Putri.'¹³ New preachers affiliated with Salafism broadcast on TV channels regularly, such as Badrussalam, Khalid Basalamah, and Syafiq

⁷ Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman, "Public Islam and the Common Good," in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, 2023.

⁸ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn,"* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

⁹ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009).

¹⁰ Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 2018.

¹¹ Dale F Eickelman and Jon W Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

¹² Gwenaél Njoto-Feillard, "L'orientation Économique Du Post-Islamisme Indonésien," *Les Cahiers de l'Orient* N° 92, no. 4 (2008).

¹³ James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam, Rebranding Islam* (Stanford University Press, 2020).

Basalamah. The increase in TV preachers underlines 'the important role of the media and mediation of Islam, Islamic symbols, and religious experiences in society and politics' in Indonesia and the world in the 21st century.¹⁴ The democratization of the media has allowed the TV industry to flourish and fulfill most of the country's audience's expectations for Islamic products and content, including TV programs.¹⁵ Further, TV preachers' appearances offer Muslim communities alternative religious authorities shaped through popular and entertainment cultures in the media. This type of Islamic practice is part of the global trend of the resurgence of religion, which shows the complex and multi-layered relationship between media and authority.¹⁶

This article focuses on the Salafi da'wah programs on Trans7 and TransTV, which include (1) *Rahasia Sunnah* (the Secret of Prophetic Traditions), (2) *Khazanah Islam* (the Treasury of Islam), and *Khalifah* (the Caliph). The various programs of da'wah available on TV facilitate some preachers from Muslim organizations to participate in its broadcast to spread their principles and reach their audiences. As a result, disputes, debates, and conflicts among Muslim organizations concerning the contents of da'wah programs on TV are unavoidable. In what follows, I will discuss the Salafi da'wah movement in Indonesia to give the social and cultural backgrounds of the Salafi movement in the country. It includes how Salafi ideology arrived, influenced, and spread throughout Indonesia. I will discuss its da'wah methods through educational institutions and media (radio and TV). I will elaborate on the emergence of Salafi da'wah programs on national commercial TV channels and the crucial role of TV producers. Afterward, I will discuss the public debates caused by

¹⁴ Ariel Heryanto, *Identity, and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture, Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014); Stewart M Hoover, *The Media and Religious Authority* (Penn State University Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Carla Jones, "Materializing Piety: Gendered Anxieties about Faithful Consumption in Contemporary Urban Indonesia," *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 4 (2010).

¹⁶ Hoover, *The Media and Religious Authority*.

the controversies of Salafi da'wah programs to see the competition of religious authorities in the broadcast of da'wah on TV.

Drawing from participatory observation and in-depth interviews with program producers and other related parties, this article strives to answer how the Salafi da'wah movement attempts to dominate the Islamic public sphere in the country and face competition with other religious authorities through da'wah programs on TV. It is argued that the emergence of the Salafi authority through the da'wah program on TV has challenged the dominance of mainstream da'wah of Nahdlatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah in the Indonesian public sphere.

Emergence of Salafi Da'wah on TV

Trans7 is a private commercial television station based in Jakarta under the corporations of Kelompok Kompas Gramedia (Gramedia Kompas Group) and CT. Corporation. It was launched on December 15, 2006. Like other private television channels, the programs on Trans7 consist of news, entertainment, talk shows, and others. The term 'mainstreaming' here means the efforts of the Salafi leaders to render Rodja TV from a community television channel into a program on private television. Based on the KPI regulation, television broadcasting can be divided into three categories: public, private, and community-based. Public and private television stations have more extensive coverage than community-based stations. The government of Indonesia owns public television, while an individual or a conglomerate owns private channels. Community television stations usually belong to a particular organization, and their coverage is limited to a specific area and accessible to people with a parabolic satellite. There was no control from the government after Habibie's liberation of press regulation in 1999. Instead, an independent institution, KPI, watches television and radio industries.¹⁷

¹⁷ For more information about broadcasting regulations in Indonesia, see Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia. "Regulasi" <https://www.kpi.go.id/download/regulasi/>. Accessed on December 22, 2016.

There are three kinds of da'wah programs in Trans7: *Rahasia Sunnah*, *Khazanah Islam*, and *Khalifah*. Da'wah programs in Trans7 differ from other private television stations regarding setup, content, and preachers. If other programs of propagation of Islam on other private televisions arrange a stage on which the preachers and a presenter sit facing the cameras, all da'wah programs in Trans7 begin with a short documentary movie concerning the topic the preacher will discuss after the introductory movie has finished. During the short documentary screening, a man or woman explains what is shown and occasionally quotes several verses of the Quran or Hadiths. This type of da'wah has appeared since 2010 in Trans7.

Another distinction concerns the contents. While da'wah programs in other channels tend to avoid controversial topics, the programs in Trans7 select such topics. For example, in the da'wah programs on Trans7, the preachers discuss the prohibition of grave visiting and some kinds of prayers. These are debatable issues in Islamic jurisprudence. Unlike other channels, which usually choose famous television preachers such as Mamah Dedeh, Yusuf Mansur, and others, da'wah programs in Trans7 choose Salafi preachers of Rodja TV such as Badrussalam, Khalid Basalamah, and Syafiq Basalah, who are not necessarily well-known. Thus, it is important to know how they can enter the domain of television preachers. Who are the agents, and what roles do they play in mainstreaming Salafism in da'wah programs on a private television station?

During my fieldwork in Jakarta in 2014, I found that the deputy chief producer of da'wah programs in Trans7 is a Salafi. I met him through a friend who works for Google in Indonesia. When I met him for the first time in a small restaurant near Trans7 studio, he appeared friendly and had a long beard and a dark spot on his forehead. He stated that he began to be a Salafi follower after he watched and listened to the da'wah programs on Rodja TV in 2009. His motivation became stronger as he planned to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. He argued that as a journalist, he had to be critical, liberal, and open-minded. Before going to Mecca, he tried to improve his religiosity. He attended several gatherings of

Islamic learning groups, yet he could only find the teachings of Islam that he was seeking once he watched and listened to Rodja TV. This bearded man had continued watching and listening to this TV channel for two years and then attended its learning communities. He has developed good relations with Rodja TV preachers through his routine attendance at the gatherings. After he returned from pilgrimage, at the beginning of 2010, he began his initiation to invite the preachers who are affiliated with Rodja TV, like Syafiq Reza Basalamah, Badrussalam, and Budi Ashari, to deliver their sermons on Trans7. He also changed the previous Islam propagation programs on Trans7 to those above.¹⁸

There are other Salafis at Trans7 apart from this deputy chief, Ruwandanu. He is the entertainment producer of Trans7, who is also a Salafi. His motivation to be a Salafi follower began after he met the deputy producer, Wiryoutomo, and Rodja TV preacher, Badrussalam. He followed their suggestion to watch and listen to Rodja TV and became a Salafi. Afterward, he requested that Trans7's management move him to the dakwah division. During the interview, he explained that:¹⁹

I was guided by several Salafi ulama in Mecca to produce programs for the sake of money and the hereafter. I was successful in producing entertainment programs in terms of audiences and ratings. Islamic programs are all right in ratings. Audience enthusiasm grows significantly. It just needs more creativity and passion. So, I moved to Islamic programs not because of my boss but because I proposed producing these programs to benefit both money and the hereafter.

The producer of the division of the entertainment program of Trans7 considers the success in producing programs that benefit economically and religiously a dream of every Muslim to be successful on earth and in the hereafter. Muslims believe that the measurement of success on earth is to earn much money and, hereafter, by improving piety. Besides his achievement as the producer of entertainment programs, the producer of the division of entertainment programs of Trans7 asserts that the vice chief producer of programs on Trans7 played an important role in the

¹⁸ Wiryoutomo, *Personal Communication*, September 12, 2014.

¹⁹ Ruwandanu, *Personal Communication*, April 5, 2016.

management's approval of his proposal to move to da'wah programs. Afterward, he joined the vice chief producer's team to produce da'wah programs in Trans7.²⁰

Rodja TV has played a pivotal role in mainstreaming Salafism on commercial television stations, especially on Trans7. Its central role can be viewed in two elements of da'wah programs in Trans7. Firstly, Trans7 has become the only channel in which all the preachers of its programs of propagation of Islam are Salafis from the Rodja TV network. The preachers in Trans7, like Badrussalam, Budi Ashari, and Syafiq Reza Basalamah, are from Rodja TV. Badrussalam is one of the founders of Rodja Media, and the others joined later. Some of them, such as Badrussalam and Ashari, produce da'wah programs in Trans7 as supervisors. This privilege allows them to invite members of their network to deliver sermons in Trans7 and even on other private television channels. Like on Rodja TV, Badrussalam states that he prioritizes the Islamic University of Medina, Saudi Arabia's alums, because of their Islamic knowledge and experience of living in a place where Islam was born. Badrussalam, Ashari and Syafiq Reza Basalamah are graduates from Islamic University of Medina. This makes them more legitimate and authoritative for particular audiences than the preachers who have never studied Islam in the Middle East.²¹

Besides, the producers of the da'wah programs on Trans7 find the role of Rodja TV preachers in Trans7 helpful because the materials have already been available from Rodja TV. The producers need a little adaptation and improvement to broadcast them in Trans7. Moreover, the da'wah programs on Trans7 - like *Khazanah* and *Khalifah* - are occasionally broadcast live from some Islamic historical sites in the Middle East, such as during the fasting month of Ramadan when they need the experiences of those preachers during their stay in the Middle East.²²

Secondly, most of the content of the da'wah programs on Trans7, ranging from topic selection to short documentary movies,

²⁰ Ruwandanu, *Personal Communication*, April 10, 2016.

²¹ Badrussalam, *Personal Communication*, May 12, 2014.

²² Ruwandanu, *Personal Communication*, April 5, 2016.

are derived from Rodja TV because the preachers are from Rodja networking. The selected topics are based on the negotiation and discussion between the preachers and producers. The producers usually agree with the preachers' suggestions about a particular subject. Ruwandanu states that the producers rarely reject the offer of issues from the preachers because they have more Islamic knowledge and experience about the propagation of Islam. On the other hand, he also asserts that it makes the producers' work much more accessible to the extent that they have to cast for five minutes only because the preachers have prepared documentary movies and the topics. Rodja TV has provided all the materials for the casting, and the producers follow the preachers' suggestions and adapt some screens and narration for their programs on the propagation of Islam.²³

Given the fact that Trans7 is a private commercial television station under the umbrella of corporations owned by Jacob Utomo (d. 2020), who was a Catholic, and is directed by Chairul Tanjung, who is not Salafi, the presence of Salafi propagation on Trans7 raises a question why the owner and director of Trans7 allow the programs of Salafi propagation through their television channel? I found that the reason behind this is for commercial purposes. Islam propagation programs have increased since the beginning of the twenty-first century in Indonesia. The emergence of Salafi propagation of Islam in Trans7 provides new models of the commodification of programs of propagation of Islam, which differ from those of other television channels as mentioned above. Ruwandanu explains that the management of Trans7 usually approves the proposed programs as long as they have a transparent market.²⁴ The Salafi-oriented propagation of Islam on Rodja TV has existed since 2009, which was expanded from radio. This means they have regular audiences, and their number of followers is increasing significantly. Besides listening to and watching Salafi media, some Muslims in urban areas around Jakarta are attending Salafi learning communities in universities,

²³ Ruwandanu, *Personal Communication*, April 5, 2016.

²⁴ Ruwandanu, *Personal Communication*, April 5, 2016.

mosques, and other places. This fact is an opportunity for Trans7 to bring Salafi propagation of Islam to their programs for audiences and benefit from this trend.

Agendas of Salafi Da'wah Programs on TV

Salafi propagation of Islam has three main agendas: (1) the purification of the creed of Islam, (2) the implementation of Sharia by law, and (3) the establishment of an Islamic state. Their agenda has become the central topic in the da'wah program Trans7. In several episodes, the programs of Salafi propagation display and criticize many kinds of practices and customs that are practiced by many Muslims in Indonesia to correct them to be in line with Salafi's teachings. Likewise, in the cases of Islamic law and the establishment of a caliphate, they discuss them in one episode because it is impossible to implement the former without the latter. According to Salafi preachers, Islamic law can be implemented fully throughout the archipelago if an Islamic state is established.

An episode of Khazanah entitled *Kupas Tuntas Syirik Besar* (Total Uncovering of the Unforgivable Sin)²⁵ Displays several local practices and customs that Khazanah categorizes as a grave sin. For example, the program states that making pilgrimages to the tombs of saints is forbidden and categorized as sinful. Many Muslims in Indonesia, especially in Java, often visit the graves of saints of Islam in Indonesia and other graves to recite several verses of the Quran and prayers around these graves. They see the graves throughout the year, while for families, it is usually conducted in Idul Fitri (the Festive Day of Islam after the fasting month of Ramadan). Muslims who visit the graves believe that God will answer their prayers because they pray at the tombs of the saints or at the graves of trusted people or friends of God, who are well known for their historical role in the spread of Islam in Indonesia. Salafis have considered all the practices (the visit to the

²⁵ *Shirk* means associating things with God or believing that there are divine things other than God, including animism. Muslims are forbidden to think that there are others as powerful as or more powerful than God.

graves and the recitation of prayers on them) misleading and categorized them as sinful because all the practices were not practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. They believe that the spirit of the saints can give them blessings and power to fulfill their requests, while according to Salafi's teaching, only God can provide blessings and fulfill Muslims' requests.²⁶

Another example of a great sin is the ritual of Malam Satu Suro (the Eve of Suro), named after a month in the Javanese calendar. It is a celebration of the New Year on the Javanese Calendar held by the Palace of Surakarta every year. The month of Suro always corresponds to or is equated with Muharram, the first month on the Islamic calendar. This ritual consists of several processions. The one shown in Khazanah of Trans7 is Kirab Mubeng Beteng (the Procession surrounding the Palace Walls). This procession includes a long line of the heirlooms of the Palace and its members witnessed by local villagers and domestic and international tourists. Other processions of Malam Satu Suro are *Tahlilan*, 'recitation of several verses from the Holy Qur'an [...] and *selawatan al-berzanzi* (recitation of the stories of the Prophet Muhammad), traditional Javanese chanting of praises to Allah and Prophet Muhammad, and *Qasidahan*, traditional religious singing accompanied by hand drums, were performed during the heart of the ceremonies. Salafi scholars categorize this ritual as misleading for several reasons. One of those reasons is that Muslims who join and support it believe that the heirlooms of the Palace of Surakarta have power equal to God. In the display, *Khazanah* quoted several verses from the Quran describing the prohibition of believing in divine powers other than God.

Regarding the quotations of the Quran and Hadith, Badrussalam stipulates that quotations of the Quranic verses and Hadiths are important to legitimize their opinion about the rituals. He continues his argument that what makes Salafi more authentic

²⁶ Recorded and uploaded to YouTube in Khazanah Islam Trans7. January 2014. "Kupas Tuntas Syirik Besar [Uncover Big Shirk]." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZLHoaj8OPI>. Accessed on November 13, 2015.

than other schools in Islam is that it always refers to the Quran and Hadiths to determine whether or not particular practices, rituals, and customs are lawful. The celebration of Malam Satu Suro is not lawful in Islam, according to them. Some scholars, who are proponents of this celebration, employ their reasoning beyond what is stated in the Quran and Hadiths, such as Qiyas.²⁷ Qiyas, which constitutes 'reasoning by analogy,' is one of the methods used to formulate Islamic law in the Sunni Islamic tradition.

Badrussalam is asked how this episode triggers a reaction from the proponents of the abovementioned practices. He answers that he has predicted the consequences of the broadcast of the *Khazanah* episode of grave sin and that 'the truth' must be revealed even though it is bitter to accept. Muslims should advise their fellow Muslims when they do something incorrect. He is not afraid of the reaction because he has strong reasons to deliver it for the sake of the propagation of Islam.²⁸ His statement reflects his consideration and anticipation of the broadcast's consequences and his firm intention to spread Salafism to national audiences.

Other episodes of Salafi's purification agenda concern Muslim groups, which *Khazanah* considers misleading. The topic of misleading Muslim groups in *Khazanah* is divided into several episodes. The first one introduces the history of the emergence of heretical groups after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, beginning with the declaration of false prophets and later the emergence of heretical Muslim groups and how the Islamic caliphates dealt with them. The false prophets were defeated by the caliphates and forced to plead for forgiveness to God.

Afterward, the second episode of *Khazanah* focuses on Ahmadiyah. Ahmadiyah is an Islamic religious movement established by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in India in the late nineteenth century. For some of his followers, he is considered a new prophet after the Prophet Muhammad. The Ahmadiyah movement came to Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century through the invitation of Indonesian students who studied Islam

²⁷ Badrussalam, *Personal Communication*, May 12, 2014.

²⁸ Badrussalam, *Personal Communication*, May 12, 2014.

in Lahore and Qadian, India. In this episode, the preacher explains how Ahmadiyah has been banned in several Muslim-majority countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh. Ahmadiyah is considered misleading based on its teachings, especially concerning the belief of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet.²⁹ The Ahmadiyah has been banned in Indonesia through a fatwa of MUI in 2005. As explained above, MUI is a semi-official institution established on July 26, 1975. President Suharto initiated its establishment. He invited some prominent Muslim scholars to form a council whose primary duty at that time was to advise the government regarding religious matters. This council is under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Most of the members of the council are affiliated with Muslim organizations, including NU, Muhammadiyah, and some Salafi organizations in the country.³⁰ Surat Keputusan Bersama (the Joint Ministerial Decree), signed by the minister of religious affairs, home affairs, and the attorney general in 2008, justified the MUI fatwa.

In the third episode of heretical Muslim groups, the preacher of Khazanah discusses Shia. This Islamic school is associated with one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, Ali bin Abu Talib. In contrast to Shia followers, the adherents of Sunni Islam believe that Muhammad did not appoint any successor before his death. Similar to the Ahmadiyah, Shia came to Indonesia before Indonesian independence and has long lived together with other Muslim organizations in Indonesia. Their presence has only become problematized after 1998. The preacher of this episode further describes Shia rituals, which are considered sinful. These include the celebration of Idul Ghadir,³¹ one of the Shia feast days is celebrated yearly on the 18th of Dzulhijah in the Islamic

²⁹ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "When Muslims Are Not Muslims: The Ahmadiyya Community and the Discourse on Heresy in Indonesia," *J Consero Dent.* 2013, 2013.

³⁰ Moch Nur Ichwan, "'Ulamā,' State and Politics: Majelis Ulama Indonesia after Suharto," *Islamic Law and Society*, 2005.

³¹ Moh Hasyim, "Shia: Its History and Development in Indonesia," *Analisa* 19, no. 2 (2012).

calendar. It is believed that on this day, the Prophet Muhammad appointed Ali bin Abu Talib as his successor to be a caliphate and leader of Muslims. This appointment was conducted in the last pilgrimage of the Prophet Muhammad before he died.

On the contrary, according to Sunni schools, there are only two feast days in Islam: Idul Fitri and Idul Adha. Bachtiar Nasir, a preacher in this episode, states that there is no other feast day other than the two feast days. He argues that Idul Ghadir can threaten the unity of Muslims in Indonesia because a misguided school celebrates it. In this episode, the preacher states that heretical sects are categorized as 'terrorists' to be a severe threat, which requires immediate action from the government in case it destroys the unity of the country. Unlike their response to the demand for the banning of Ahmadiyah, the central board of MUI in Jakarta seems reluctant to issue a fatwa banning Shia in Indonesia, even though its headquarters in Surabaya has issued it.

The last episode of Khazanah discusses the heresy of *Jaringan Islam Liberal* or JIL (the Liberal Islam Network). JIL is a forum for discussing and disseminating the concept of Islamic liberalism in Indonesia. The first discussion, considered the date of its establishment, was held on February 21, 2001, by one of its leaders, Luthfi Assyaukanie. Most members of JIL have a Western education background, and some have studied Islam in the Middle East. The key reason for its establishment was to counter the growth of Islamic radical and militant groups in Indonesia.³² Concerning JIL, the preacher of Khazanah asserts that JIL is misleading because it disseminates the ideas of pluralism, liberalism, and secularism. These ideas have been banned by MUI through their fatwa in 2005. As the fatwa on Ahmadiyah, MUI explained that the spread of pluralism, liberalism, and secularism had created public confusion.

Therefore, MUI considered it necessary to issue a religious opinion about it. This fatwa was issued by the same committee in the same year as that for Ahmadiyah. Referring to the fatwa

³² Ahmad Ali Nurdin, "Islam and State: A Study of The Liberal Islamic Network in Indonesia," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 7, no. 2 (2005).

of MUI, Khazanah explains that pluralism teaches people that all religions are similar to one another and all the adherents of religions in the world will live side by side in heaven, and liberalism is dangerous because it prioritizes free thinking in interpreting the text of the Quran and select the teachings of Islam only for their benefits. In respect of secularism, Khazanah explains that it attempts to separate religion from human matters on earth and that human matters on earth have nothing to do with religion but are to decide based on consensus amongst people.

In these episodes of heretical Muslim groups, the preachers criticize the government, which does not ban Shia and JIL, as they have done with banning Ahmadiyah. The followers of those mentioned above heretical Muslim groups still exist in Indonesia, but they have faced difficulties in performing their beliefs. The followers of Ahmadiyah in several districts in Indonesia left their homes because they refused to follow the mainstream beliefs of Sunni Islam in Indonesia. The majority of Muslims forbid the adherents of Shia to perform their rituals publicly, while JIL is frequently subject to threats and violence.

Another agenda of Salafi propagation of Islam in Trans7 is to disseminate the idea of the re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate and the implementation of Islamic law. According to Salafi preachers on Trans7, the former will never be realized without the latter because the enforcement of Islamic law for all Muslims requires the establishment of a new Islamic caliphate, which governs all Muslims' affairs in the world. In the Khazanah episode, Wadah Politik Umat Muslim (The Organization of Muslim Politics), it is stated that the concept of Islamic caliphate and enforcement of Islamic law they propose refers to that of HTI. In this episode, the preacher states that:³³

HTI is an Islamic organization with huge supporters that aims to establish the system of an Islamic caliphate. In this system, the aspirations of Muslim communities all over the world to be under one government without territorial borders [will be realized], [it is] a country led by a system of the

³³ This quote is based on the recording of the *Khazanah* episode about the Muslim Political Organisation on May 11, 2015.

Islamic caliphate, which re-enforces Islamic law system as guidance to rule and live in the world. The implementation of Islamic law based on the principles of HTI will bring Muslims in Indonesia and all over the world to prosperity and welfare without violating non-Muslims' rights. The big mission of HTI is to re-establish the Islamic caliphate, exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad.

The statement of the preacher in the episode of *Khazanah* explicitly invites Muslims in Indonesia to support HTI to establish an Islamic caliphate. On the other hand, it implies a campaign to fight against democracy, which is regarded as causing problems and disadvantaging Muslims throughout the world. They blame leaders elected through a democratic system for economic crises, moral degradation, and natural disasters. In this episode, they offer the re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate as a problem-solving solution as they argue that God supports this caliphate and employs a system based on the Prophet's guidance. In response to the implementation of Sharia bylaws in several provinces and districts in Indonesia,³⁴ the preachers argue that it is not what is ordered in the Quran, which, according to their interpretation, Islamic law must be enforced for the whole Muslim community in the world, not limited to several provinces or countries. This is what is taught by the Prophet Muhammad concerning a government system.

The idea and concept of an Islamic caliphate in the program of *Khalifah* reinforces *Khazanah*. The topics of *Khalifah* are dominated by the success stories of Muslim caliphs and soldiers in the battles against infidels in the early years of Islam. For example, in its episode about Khalid bin Walid, a military commander in the service of the Prophet Muhammad, the preacher talked about Khalid's success in leading Muslim armies in several wars under the first Muslim Caliph of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. In this episode, the preacher explains their bravery of Khalid in fighting the enemies of Islam, including those who do not obey the regulations like paying taxes under the Islamic caliphate, the infidels who attempted to conquer several Islamic

³⁴ Nicholas Parsons and Marcus Mietzner, "Sharia Bylaws in Indonesia: A Legal and Political Analysis," *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 11, no. 2 (2009).

territories, and several Muslims who declared themselves as new prophets after the Prophet Muhammad. Further, the preacher stipulates that Israel and the U.S. are among the enemies of Islam because they conquered Palestine, one of the Islamic territories. Still, Muslims cannot fight because of the absence of an Islamic caliphate. Another example that strengthens the dissemination of the Islamic caliphate is the episode of the Umayyad caliphate. In this episode, the preacher preaches a sermon on the background of the fall of the Umayyad caliphate for the audience to take lessons that the segregation of the Muslim community at the time resulted in the fall of the caliphate.

The case of Salafi da'wah in Trans7 indicates Salafi leaders' successful effort to mainstream Salafism's ideas from a community to commercial television. The agendas of Salafi propagation of Islam, which have been a subordinate discourse of programs of propagation of Islam through private television channels, now appear on a mainstream one. Their religious agenda of purification and the political aim of establishing an Islamic caliphate and law are central in Islamic discourses on television in Indonesia today.

Challenging the Mainstream Da'wah Programs

The emergence of Salafi propagation of Islam on Trans7 and others has sparked significant debates in society. Notably, the leaders and members of NU have taken a pivotal role in leading this debate. Their reactions to the criticism of da'wah programs in Trans7, which have challenged the agendas of NU, the largest Muslim organization in the country, are of particular importance. NU's three main da'wah agendas, reconciliation with Indonesian tradition, accepting and guarding the national ideology, and adopting local Islamic law culture are central to this debate.³⁵ All the agendas of Salafi propagation of Islam in Trans7 oppose those of NU. As a result, competition between

³⁵ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "2. Defining Indonesian Islam. An Examination of the Construction of the National Islamic Identity of Traditionalist and Modernist Muslims," in *Islam in Indonesia*, 2018.

the two opposing parties to convince Indonesian Muslims is unavoidable.

Yahya Zainul Ma'arif, known as Buya Yahya, a prominent preacher, reacted strongly to an episode of *Khazanah* titled 'Kupas Tuntas Shirk Besar.' In the program 'Siraman Qalbu' (Drenching of Heart) on MNCTV, a platform for the propagation of Islam, Buya Yahya criticized *Khazanah* for not respecting the diversity of opinions in Islamic jurisprudence. He argued that the program's claims about certain Indonesian Muslim practices were misleading. He further pointed out that there is a group of Muslims who are constantly correcting the practices of their fellow Muslims, a group he implied to be the Salafis, whether on television or in society.³⁶

Moreover, several Muslim scholars from NU in Jakarta and Surabaya reported the same episode of *Khazanah* to KPI. In this episode, the reporters consider *Khazanah* to provoke hatred towards a particular school of Islamic jurisprudence and create intolerance towards diverse practices within Muslim communities because they categorize the practices of NU, such as recitation of *Tahlilan*, visit of graves, and so forth, as misleading. In response to this report, KPI held mediation on April 17, 2013, in the central office in Jakarta. KPI invited the reporters, who consisted of Habib Musthafa al Jufri, Habib Fachri Jamalullail, K.H. Thabary Syadzily, the chair of the central board of Lembaga Dakwah NU or LDNU (Da'wah Council of NU) H. Nuril Huda, MUI, and the producers of *Khazanah* to meet and discuss the issues.³⁷

In this mediation, Idy Muzayyad from KPI suggested that da'wah programs in Trans7 should have avoided sensitive and controversial topics that might stimulate public polemic in the

³⁶ Quoted from the recording of the episode of *Siraman Qalbu* MNCTV on October 1, 2015.

³⁷ For the report of the mediation, see Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia. April 2013. "Trans7 Penuhi Undangan Dialog KPI Pusat Soal Tayangan *Khazanah* [Trans7 Fulfil KPI's Invitation for Dialogue regarding *Khazanah* Broadcasting]." <https://www.kpi.go.id/index.php/lihat-terkini/38-dalam-negeri/31294-trans-7-penuhi-undangan-dialog-kpi-pusat-soal-tayangan-khazanah>. Accessed on December 8, 2016.

society as mentioned in article 7 of the regulation of Standard Program Siaran or SPS (the Standard Program of Broadcasting). After this mediation, he stated that KPI will closely monitor da'wah programs in Trans7 to ensure they obey the regulation. If they do not, KPI will meet to decide on a punishment, which can be advice or a ban on the programs. At the time, KPI and MUI recommended that Khazanah involve an MUI representative to supervise the programs' production. In response to this recommendation, Khazanah production was promised to involve Muslim scholars. In response, the chief of the Redaction of Trans7, Titin Rosmasari, accepted the suggestion of KPI and admitted that the contents of Khazanah have sensitive and controversial issues that might offend particular Muslim organizations. She states that Trans7 will select topics for the contents of their Islam propagation programs more carefully.³⁸ Although the producers of Khazanah promised to involve Muslim scholars from MUI in the mediation, they have not accomplished this promise. Ruwandanu argues that Trans7 has several Muslim scholars engaged in the production, and therefore, they do not need to bring other Muslim scholars to supervise da'wah programs in Trans7.³⁹

Another episode of Khazanah on Trans7, which had triggered a protest, was the program about Shi'ism and the Shiites in Indonesia. A Syiah Organization, Ikatan Jemaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia or IJABI (the Association of the Followers of Ali bin Abu Tholib and his Family), reported the episode of Khazanah about Shia to KPI and demanded them to conduct mediation. KPI mediated between Trans7 and IJABI and invited MUI on November 7, 2013, in the central office of KPI. The secretary general of IJABI, Adi Bunardi, complained that the episode of Khazanah about Shia was unfair as it provided a one-

³⁸ Zaky Al Hamzah. "KPI Peringatkan 'Khazanah Trans7' [KPI Warn Khazanah Trans7." <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/news-update/13/04/18/mleuqe-kpi-peringatkan-khazanah-trans7>. Accessed on December 8, 2016.

³⁹ Ruwandanu, *Personal Communication*, April 15, 2016.

sided and prejudicial opinion. Besides, it was full of inaccuracies and false stories, which might provoke hostility towards Shiites in Indonesia. After listening to the explanation of Titin Rosmasari, the chief editor of Trans7, the secretary general of IJABI urged Trans7 to apologize and arrange a similar episode special for IJABI as clarification for the previous one. Trans7 responded that they needed a month to consider the requests. Adi Burnadi stated that if, after a month, he did not have the answer to the promises of Trans7, he would have brought the case to the court. On January 17, 2014, the producers of Khazanah on Trans7 broadcasted an episode entitled *Mencintai Rasulullah* (the Loving the Prophet of God) to fulfill the request of IJABI. In this episode, they invited the prominent scholar of Syiah, Jalaluddin Rahmat. He delivered a sermon about the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad and explained the birth of Syiah and its position to the Prophet.⁴⁰

For Salafi followers, following the way of life of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim men and women living in his period is significant, including physical appearance. Identifying themselves as Salafis, men grow long beards, wear headscarves, turbans, and trousers right to their ankles, and women wear a form of enveloping black veil in public places (Hasan 2010 p. 301). The conflict concerning one of these physical appearances began when one of the Salafi programs of propagation of Islam stated that the Prophet Muhammad suggested Muslim men grow their beards. Besides showing their masculinity, it is part of the Prophet Muhammad's tradition because the Prophet also had grown his beard during his lifetime. It is the way that Muslims perform their religion thoroughly, as written in the Quran, that Muslims must convert to Islam perfectly.⁴¹

Some Muslims found this statement about growing a beard as a sign of performing Islam perfectly unreasonable since it is,

⁴⁰ For the report of this mediation, see Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia. "KPI Mediasi Ijabi dengan Trans7 soal Khazanah" <http://kpi.go.id/index.php/lihat-terkini/38-dalam-negeri/31689-kpi-mediasi-ijabi-dengan-trans7-soal-khazanah>. Accessed on December 8, 2016.

⁴¹ Mozaik Islam, *Serba-serbi menumbuhkan Jenggot*, episode, May 17, 2016.

in fact, a suggestion, not an obligation for Muslims from the Prophet. The chairman of NU, Said Aqil Siradj, responded in one of his sermons that Muslims do not have to grow their beards because it is part of Arab culture. He mentioned several Indonesian Muslim scholars like Abdurrahman Wahid (d. 2009) and Nurcholis Madjid (d. 2005) as examples to support his statement that they did not grow their beards. He further asserts that what is suggested by Salafi preachers is part of Arabization, not Islamization. Therefore, Muslims in Indonesia must have their characteristics different from those in the Arab world.⁴² Khalid Basalamah, one of the Salafi preachers on Trans7, reacts to Said's statement that it is not about Arabization. Instead, he confirms that it is about following the Prophet's tradition; refusing to grow a beard means refusing the Prophet.⁴³ Islamic jurisprudence clearly states that the Prophet Muhammad's suggestion or recommendation allows Muslims to obey or reject it. Those who obey will be rewarded, and those who do not are not sinful.

All the media captured this debate and exacerbated the reaction of Muslims, resulting in some disagreement between different Muslim communities. Several talk shows on television invited actors who have followed Salafism and grown their beards to deliver their opinions and feelings to be loyal Salafi followers. Progressive Muslim scholars were also invited to discuss different interpretations of the related prophetic traditions.

The availability of the Internet has enabled the debate regarding beards to be discussed in Islamic learning groups, community radio and television, and mosques. This turned into a national discourse. Both parties attempt to convince Muslim

⁴² A video of the program Satu Jam Lebih Dekat with Said Aqil Siradj was recorded on TVOne on December 1, 2015.

⁴³ A recorded document of Khalid Basalamah's reaction, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKIaeQy20DM>, accessed on December 22, 2016.

For the recorded document of News Islam Channels, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYVDUGNaYn4>, Accessed on July 10, 2016.

congregations of their interpretations to occupy public discourses. In addition to these parties, several television preachers are trying to redeem the conflict by explaining that the status of the prophetic traditions is merely a suggestion. It is different from obligation. A suggestion can be neglected, and those who do so are not sinful. Therefore, some Muslims may disagree with growing beards, while God rewards those who decide to produce them.⁴⁴

Television preachers have roles in regional and national elections to influence Muslim political attitudes. Their involvement is unavoidable since they are one of the religious authorities in the democratization era. It can be intentional for the preachers to discuss a particular topic concerning the coming election or unintentionally for them because they have to respond to their audience's questions about the election. The debate of the election is mainly dominated by the issue of piety, gender, and non-Muslim leadership in the Muslim majority country.

Television preachers also had divided opinions concerning the presidential candidacy of Megawati in 2004. Some preachers on television urged Muslims not to elect her because of her gender. According to them, it is prohibited for Muslims to elect a woman as a leader in Islam based on the Quran and Hadiths.⁴⁵ Other television preachers countered their opinions while explaining to the audiences that the verses of the Quran and Hadith concerning the prohibition of women to be leaders are not relevant to the presidential candidacy. All the verses and sayings of the Prophet refer to the ban on choosing a woman as an imam in prayers. The debates on women's leadership have continued since the presidential election in 2004 until now regarding women's candidacy ranging from the election of regent to president in the country. For example, in 2011, the

⁴⁴ For example, in Q.S. 4:34, "Men are in charge of women ...".

⁴⁵ For more information, see DetikNews. "MUI: Fatwa Haram Presiden Perempuan Tak Perlu Ditanggapi." <http://news.detik.com/berita/160786/mui-fatwa-haram-presiden-perempuan-tak-perlu-ditanggapi>. Accessed on December 23, 2016.

MUI branch in Riau province issued a fatwa prohibiting a woman from taking a leadership position. However, the central board of MUI in Jakarta has a different opinion and has rejected the fatwa of the MUI branch in Riau. Din Syamsuddin, the secretary general of MUI and the former chairman of Muhammadiyah, states that women's leadership in Islam is debatable because Muslim scholars have different opinions about it. The central board of MUI is against the fatwa of the MUI branch in Riau and has ordered them to withdraw it.⁴⁶

The most recent political debates of the election involving television preachers are concerned with whether it is lawful to elect non-Muslims as leaders. Since 2012, the debates on non-Muslim candidacy have lasted when Jokowi and Basuki T. Purnama or Ahok were nominated as the candidates for the governor and vice-governor of Jakarta. Besides the fact that Ahok is of Christian and Chinese descent, a rumor spread that Jokowi is also not a Muslim. Therefore, it is forbidden in Islam to vote for him. They asked Muslims to vote for his rival, Fauzi Bowo, who was considered a pious and humble Muslim. The result of the election, however, sent Jokowi to be the governor of Jakarta and as the vice-governor. The same situation occurred when Jokowi decided to run for the presidential election in 2014. Afterward, the fierce debates of the election amongst television preachers are the candidacy of Ahok for the governor election of Jakarta in 2017. These debates began before the election after Ahok, the former vice-governor of Jokowi, announced his plan to run for the governor election in 2017. His candidacy is controversial to Muslims because he is not a Muslim and is of Chinese descent. Anti-Chinese sentiment increased significantly from 1996 to 1999. People of Chinese descent in Jakarta often experienced harassment and violence in the riot of 1998 and the follow-up until 1999. This sentiment has remained in the aftermath of reformation. Moreover, his religion exacerbated the debates because, as mentioned above, Muslims are forbidden to vote for non-Muslims to be leaders.

⁴⁶ Jemma Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005.

Regarding Ahok's candidacy, television preachers' opinions have varied. The majority of television preachers are in favor of Salafis, and electing non-Muslims as leaders is forbidden in Islam. They refer to several verses of the Quran to justify their opinions. Amongst these preachers are Aa Gym, Yusuf Mansur, and Buya Yahya. The only television preacher who supported Muslims to elect non-Muslims as leaders was Maulana. He usually preaches in the *Islam itu Indah* da'wah program (Islam is Beautiful) on TransTV. In one of the episodes on November 9, 2015, he stated that it is lawful to elect women and non-Muslims as leaders because the election of leadership has nothing to do with religion (Islam). What is relevant to it is to choose a leader who can uphold justice and welfare for the people. His statement triggered reactions from other television preachers and Muslim organizations, including MUI. Several Muslims in Jakarta held a protest against him and urged him to apologize for his statement, which was considered to hurt Muslims. Due to these reactions and protests, Maulana delivered his apology publicly to the central office of MUI and asked for guidance from them in his propagation of Islam.⁴⁷

On the contrary, the chairman of NU, Said Aqil Siradj, says Muslims are allowed to choose a non-Muslim as their leader if the leader is fair and honest. In an interview session in his office in Jakarta, he stated that his statement about the possibility of Muslims choosing non-Muslims as leaders had nothing to do with Ahok's candidacy. He was merely eager to deliver what Ibnu Taymiyya, one of the prominent Muslim scholars, said that electing a fair non-Muslim is better than an unfair Muslim to be a leader. When further asked about the verses of the Quran prohibiting Muslims from choosing non-Muslims as leaders, he stated that the context of the verses is if there are two candidates of leaders (one Muslim and the other is a non-

⁴⁷ Amri Amrullah. "Ustadz Maulana: Maaf Bila Ceramah Saya ada yang Salah." <http://khazanah.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/15/11/19/ny178c334-ustaz-maulana-maaf-bila-ceramah-saya-ada-yang-salah>. Accessed on December 22, 2016.

Muslim), who are fair and honest, Muslims are forbidden to choose the non-Muslim candidate as a leader.⁴⁸

Based on the above discussions, it is evident that da'wah programs through commercial television have become an arena for preachers to define Muslim attitudes in contemporary Indonesia. They respond quickly to the trends in the society. Television media benefit from the reaction in terms of the ratings and audiences. The updated topics of da'wah programs through television concerning societal debates stimulate the audiences to watch and follow the programs.

Conclusion

The appearance of Salafi da'wah programs on private TV stations is novel to the extent that Salafism generally avoids commercial media platforms. Salafi followers prefer to arrange media for their da'wah, such as printed media, radio, and community TV channels. They consider commercial media to corrupt da'wah and mix it with material purposes. Rodja TV, one of Indonesia's Salafi community TV stations, sees it differently. Rodja TV founders view national private TV stations as an opportunity for their da'wah and to eradicate misleading Islamic practices. They bring their programs to national private TV stations, Trans7 and TransTV, in which they correct the majority of Muslim rituals. The followers of NU practice these rituals. They also propagate on TV against the beliefs and practices of Shia followers. As a result, the conflict between the producers or preachers of Salafi da'wah programs on Trans7 and TransTV, and NU, as well as Shia leaders, cannot be avoided. This conflict proves the contestation of religious authority among them to obtain legitimacy and represent faithful Islam. NU and MUI see the presence of Salafism on Trans7 as unacceptable because its ideology and agendas contradict theirs and the Indonesian state's ideology. Salafi da'wah on TV renders their agendas to become a mainstream discourse on private television in line with the rise of their propagation in society.

⁴⁸ Said Aqil Siradj, *Personal Communication*, May 6, 2016.

Rodja TV attracted the attention of the program producers in Trans7, who later became an entrance for Salafi preachers to dominate the production of da'wah programs in Trans7.

In defining Muslims' attitudes, the agendas of Salafi propagation of Islam in Trans7 oppose several Muslim organizations. As a result, their members have reacted and created societal debates. The clash between Salafism and Muslim organizations like NU and IJABI in defining Muslim attitudes in da'wah programs through television delineates three central points of Islam in contemporary Indonesia. Firstly, the reaction of NU towards the emergence of Salafism in da'wah programs through television stations reminds us of the background of its establishment in 1926, which was a reaction to the rise of Wahhabism in the Middle East and its influence in the country. The current reaction of NU is also a response to the rise of Salafism through television. The clash between NU and Salafism depicts the contestation between Salafism promoting the concept of globalized Islam. This means that Muslims in Indonesia are struggling to define themselves amongst their fellow Muslims in the world. Secondly, although its ideology is against that of the state and democracy, the Salafi propagation of Islam on Rodja TV has benefited from the democratic system of the state, especially the freedom of expression. It makes it possible for the Salafi leaders to propagate their agendas, including the re-establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia. Finally, the rise of tension between two opposing parties in da'wah programs on television stations has forced the government through KPI to reinforce its role as the monitoring institution of broadcasting.

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