



**FRAGMENTATION OF DAKWAH MEDIA:
Exploring Exclusive Islam in Indonesia Post-Reform
Popular Islamic Novels**

**Muhamad Taufik Kustiawan^{1a}, Mhd. Rasidin^{2b},
Doli Witro^{3c}, Darti Busni^{2d}, Mufti Labib Jalaluddin^{4e}**

¹UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta; ²Institut Agama Islam
Negeri Kerinci; ³UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung;

⁴Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia

Email: ^aawankusti09@gmail.com; ^bmhd.rasidin02@gmail.com;

^cdoliwitro01@gmail.com; ^ddartibusniainkerinci@gmail.com;

^emufti.jalaluddin@uiii.ac.id

Abstract: This article aims to highlight Islamic exclusivism in the form of popular Islamic novels for children's reading books in Indonesia after the reform of 1998. Building on the media theory of Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, this study explains Islamic pop novels as Islamic educational materials from a semiotic approach, structuralism, and critical discourse analysis. In particular, this study uses qualitative research methods by descriptively analyzing the reading of Islamic pop novels spreading in the Qur'anic Education Centre in Central Java. The results showed that since the Reformation, the movement used books, newsletters, magazines, and children's readings of Islamic pop novels to shape the religious thoughts of urban Muslim children and youth in Indonesia. There is hardly a story related to diversity, the value of tolerance, and mutual respect between religious people in those materials. The awareness of religious comprehension in children's reading seems exclusive. It must be realized by various parties that the media utilizing Islamic literature is very influential on the growth and development of children's religious thinking in the educational space in the metropolis.

Keywords: Da'wah Media, Islamic Exclusivism, Islamic Popular Novels

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Introduction

SINCE the rise of Islam in the 20th century, Islamic political movements and Islamic law in Muslim countries have undergone universal modernization and development. This development was

influenced by Islamic renewal figures such as Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905 M), Rasyid Ridha (1865-1935 M), Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949 M), Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1838-1897 M), Sayyid Quthb (1906-1966 M), Muhammad Qutb (1919-2014 M) and others.¹ These Islamic thinkers produced something new (*tajaddud*) by updating the theory and methodology of Islamic thought.² This is because the social changes in the Islamic world recently have increasingly made Islam retreat due to taklid and the outbreak of syncretism. The understanding of taklid keeps Muslims confined to previous schools so that there is no attempt to give rise to the idea of a dynamic, flexible, and contemporary modernization of Islamic law. These reformist Islamic thinkers then sought to actualize educational, political, legal, and economic thought by examining the concept of theological modernization (Islam) influenced by Western culture.³

In the 1890s, Muhammad Abduh formulated the basics of modernization by developing the Islamic education system at Al-Azhar University.⁴ The reform of the oldest Islamic education system had a partial and universal impact on influencing other emerging modern educational institutions in the Middle East.⁵ This educational reform focuses on rationalism to generate ijtihad in exploring contemporary issues. Thinking using ratios (reason) is the best way to solve Muslims' problems and demands in science lagging. This lack of knowledge greatly influenced developments in politics, law, economics, and science, which are still socio-cultural problems that Muslims face.

However, the historical record of the renewal of Islamic education of these reformist thinkers also turned out to have an influence on aspects of Islamic thought in the modern world. The

¹ Munawir Sjadzali, *Islam Dan Tata Negara: Ajaran, Sejarah, Dan Perkembangan* (Jakarta: UI-Press, 1998), 1.

² Abul A'la Maududi, *Langkah-Langkah Pembaharuan Islam*, ed. Dadang Kahmad (Bandung: Pustaka, 1995), 41.

³ H.A.R. Gibb, *Aliran-Aliran Modern Dalam Islam*, ed. L.E. Hakim (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1952), 75.

⁴ John L Esposito, *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics* (United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2013), 38.

⁵ Esposito, 47.

influence of this thought gave birth to new patterns in studying the interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith that are increasingly diverse in the Middle East to Southeast Asia, including Indonesia.⁶ The diversity of the *ijtihad*s of the *mujtahids* gave birth to a different understanding of Islam because it was based on the understanding of textual interpretation and contextual interpretation. This historical account can be observed from the birth of the school of thought (*kalam*), which emerged and carried ideologies based on symbolic Islamic movements.⁷ Islamic political constataions also influence political and legal policies that often trigger tensions and conflicts between Islamic groups. At first, the conflict arose due to differences in the doctrines of religious sects such as fundamentalism, neo-fundamentalism, conservatism, modernism, and neo-modernism, some of which did not have an egalitarian attitude between groups.⁸

The various Islamic education (*Tarbiyah*) movements that entered the community were very influential among young people. The community regularly hosts many discussion forums to encourage more young Muslims to read and write Islamic fiction or pop novels. Some members of Islamic parties, such as the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS, the Prosperous Justice Party), are mostly graduates of Middle Eastern universities. There are more proselytization channels to spread Arab culture. Like most in general, this movement is in demand among highly educated young people because middle-class Muslims dominate their sociological base.⁹ They also spread proselytizing through

⁶ Mona Abaza, *Pendidikan Islam Dan Pergeseran Orentasi: Studi Kasus Alumni Al-Azhar* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1999), 40.

⁷ Aksin Wijaya, *Dari Membela Tuhan Ke Membela Manusia: Kritik Atas Nalar Agamaisasi Kekerasan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2018), 45.

⁸ Muhamad Taufik Kustiawan, "Genealogi Kontestasi Kepemimpinan Islam: Melacak Populisme Islam Indonesia Di Zaman Post-Truth," *Makalah*, 2019, 2; Ade Alimah, "Contemplative and Transformative Learning for Character Development in Islamic Higher Education," *Ullumuna* 24, no. 1 (2020): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujiis.v24i1.384>.

⁹ Najwa Abdullah and Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, "Islamisation in the Indonesian Media Spaces New Sites for a Conservative Push," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 3 (2018): 219, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2018.1525894>.

Islamic pop novels as teaching and educational material for children to introduce the ideology of Islamism after the Reformation.¹⁰

Metropolitan cities became the basis of the Islamic populism movement, whose ideas were then channeled through the publication of children's reading books. These publishers include; Akbar Media, Grup Al-Qowam, Grup Aqwam, Penerbitan As-Salam, Grup At-Tibyan, Grup At-Tuqo, Buana Ilmu Islami, Darul Falah, Darul Haq, Darus Sunnah, Daun Publishing, Grup Elba, Griya Ilmu, Ibnu Azka Pers, Insan Kamil, Media Hidayah, Media Tarbiyah, Penerbitan Muamalah, Nashirus Sunnah, Perisai Qur'an Qids, Perpustakaan Al-Furqon, Perpustakaan Al-Kautsar, Perpustakaan Amanah, Perpustakaan Kelompok Arafah, Perpustakaan As-Sunnah, Perpustakaan Kelompok At-Taqwa, Perpustakaan At-Tazka, Perpustakaan Azzam, Perpustakaan Ibn Kathir, Perpustakaan Ibn Umar, Perpustakaan Imam Bonjol, Perpustakaan Imam Syafi'i, Perpustakaan Muslim, Perpustakaan Progresif, Penerbitan PQS, Rumah Ilmu, Syamiil Qur'an, Qisthy, Zam-Zam Group, and others.

This research focuses on some of the readings produced by the publisher Perisai Qur'an Kids in Jakarta and As-Salam Kids in Surakarta to find out more about reading Islamic pop novels as a proselytizing medium that can affect children in schools, campuses, and urban and rural Muslim communities, especially in *Tempat Pendidikan al-Qur'an* (TPA, Qur'an Education Center) in Keyongan village, Ngrombo, Plupuh, Sragen, Central Java. This

¹⁰ On the global and local phenomena regarding this issue, see Mirwais Balkhi, "The Revival of an Old Narrative to Counter Terrorism: The 'Balkh School Approach' to Neutralizing the Neo-Kharijite Narrative in the Islamic World," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 12, no. 1 (May 11, 2022): 97-124, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2022.12.1.97-124>; and Syafieh Syafieh, Noviandy Noviandy, and Muhammad Amin, "Fastabiq Al-Khairāt: Islamic Congregation and Everyday Competition among Puritan and Traditionalist Muslim in Aceh," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 22, no. 1 (February 23, 2022): 63, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v22i1.7760>; See also, in the context of the Qur'anic interpretation rosihan Karman Karman et al., "The Design for Emancipatory Quran Interpretation Learning to Deradicalize Students' Quran Understanding," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (December 31, 2021): 165-80, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i2.12720>.

article aimed to highlight the proselytization of Islamic exclusivism in the form of popular Islamic novels used as children's reading material after the Reformation.

This research uses qualitative methods by descriptively analyzing the reading of Islamic pop novels after the Reformation. Data collection was carried out through interviews, observations, and document studies on pop novels, particularly those published by Perisai Qur'an Kids, As-Salam Kids¹¹, Perpustakaan Imam Asy-Syafi'i¹², and Kids Tauhid. or. Id¹³. There are approximately 21 Islamic pop novels as children's readings that were studied and analyzed in this study in the Qur'an Education Place in Keyongan village, Ngrombo, Plupuh, Sragen, Central Java. This research draws on Gill Branston and Roy Stafford's theory of media to explain Islamic pop novels as part of a media text that needs to be studied using a semiotic approach to structuralism. This is intended so that (readers) can understand the language, images, interpretations, and visual signs of Islamic pop novels as Islamic educational material for Indonesian children. To test the validity of the field data, this study also involved interviewing teachers of TPA in Keyongan village, Ngrombo, Plupuh, Sragen, and Central Java. The data in this article are presented in a narrative-descriptive way. The data analysis techniques used are Miles et al. qualitative data analysis techniques, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.¹⁴

Islamic Thought and Literacy Contestation

Since the fall of the New Order, the Islamic populism movement began to develop and build a proselytizing (*da'wa*) movement through social media, magazines, books, and Islamic

¹¹ Ummu Aqila Mumtazah, *Aku Cinta Allah & Rasulullah: Kisah & Hikmah Penuh Keteladanan & Pesan Moral* (Surakarta: As-Salam Kids, 2010), 3.

¹² Tim Buku Anak Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i, *Alhamdulillah Aku Bisa Wudhu Dan Shalat: Seperti Wudhu Dan Shalat Rasulullah* (Jakarta: Pustaka Imam asy-Syafi'i, 2020), 1.

¹³ Tim Redaksi Kids Tauhidorid, *Adab Makan Dan Minum#1: Sesuai Dengan Tuntunan Rasulullah* (Depok: Kids Tauhidorid, 2015), 1.

¹⁴ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 31–33.

pop novels. The Islamic populism movement represents an exclusive Islamic movement that does not accept diversity or different views in understanding the teachings of Islam. This exclusivism of Islamic proselytizing is then taught and relies on the Qur'an and hadith as a basis for answering various Islamic religious problems. Islamic movements in Indonesia can be represented by several Islamic organizations such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Laskar Jihad (LJ), Laskar Mujahidin Indonesia (LMI), and others.¹⁵ These movements are dominated by *Salafi* figures who developed transnational movements in Indonesia after the Reformation.

Freedom of opinion, assembly, and networking has led several figures such as Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, Ja'far Umar Thalib, Muhammad Umar As-Sewed, Ayip Syafruddin, Ma'ruf Bahrin, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, and Irfan S. Awwas to form militant Islamic organizations affiliated with the growing Salafi and Wahhabi movements in major cities in Indonesia. The doctrine of proselytizing that Salafi-Wahhabi has always taught, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, invites Muslims to return to the Qur'an and hadith as a source of law as well as a solution to the life guidelines of Muslims. Such movements reject the views of contemporary scholars with the presence of dynamically developing sources of Islamic law, such as *ijmā'*, *qiyās*, *maṣlaḥa marsala*, *istiḥsān*, *'urf*, and *istiḥbāb*.¹⁶ They also reject Qur'anic reinterpretation in the reconstruction of Western thought, for example, the idea of equality between men and women (gender), democratic systems, positive laws, freedom of human rights, and others.¹⁷

Belief in the basic concepts of Islamic law that are integrated into the understanding or doctrine of this movement shows that the concepts carried out in the administration of the state must be fought to realize an Islamic state in Indonesia. The step taken by

¹⁵ Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militansi, Dan Pencarian Identitas Di Indonesia Pasca-Orde Baru*, ed. Hairus Salim (Jakarta: LP3ES & KITLV-Jakarta, 2008), 3.

¹⁶ Mukhtar Yahya, *Dasar-Dasar Pembinaan Hukum Islam* (Bandung: Al-Ma'arif, 1993), 100.

¹⁷ Carool Kersten, *Berebut Wacana: Pergulatan Wacana Umat Islam Indonesia Era Reformasi* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2018), 58.

these movements is to carry out constitutional *jihād*, which is sometimes also done through violence and coercion to build Islamic political power. Sometimes these exclusive Islamic movements also involve their members in playing political rhythms and contestations for the benefit of the organizations.¹⁸ Figures from Islamic mass organizations are also involved in practical politics to get subsidies for the benefit of their organizations.¹⁹

One of the phenomena that has emerged in recent years is fundamentalism in religion.²⁰ Al Zastrouw Ng noted the organization's interests and made a typology of radical Islamic movements, especially in Indonesia, including critical radical Islamic movements, fundamentalist radical Islamic movements, and radical Islamic movements during the New Order period. The critical radical Islamic movement emerged not because of ideological awareness of the reflection of the values of Islamic teachings. Rather, this movement arose due to social pressure, arbitrariness, and social injustice by the colonial government against indigenous groups. The Banten peasant uprising in the Garut incident (1919) is a clear example of this movement. The two resistance movements are examples of reflections of critical radical Islamic movements.

Meanwhile, radical fundamentalist Islamic movements are more centered on the orientation of ideological movements than social movements. This movement is more concerned with embedding Islamic ideology in the social structure rather than paying attention to realizing a just social order through the process of social change. The character of this movement is very rigid and stiff and rejects the understanding of the Islamic style, which upholds culture; this movement does not hesitate to fight fellow Muslims who are considered heretical and deviant. The concrete

¹⁸ Ian Douglas Wilson, *Politik Jatah Preman: Ormas Dan Kuasa Jalanan Di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru* (Tangerang Selatan: Marjin Kiri, 2018), 197.

¹⁹ Al-Zastrouw Ng, *Gerakan Islam Simbolik: Politik Kepentingan FPI* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2006), 47.

²⁰ Ismail Thoib, "Menggagas Reformasi Pendidikan Islam: Telaah Filosofis Paradigmatik," *Ullumuna* 11, no. 1 (June 30, 2007): 141, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v11i1.424>.

form of this radical-fundamentalist Islamic movement can be seen again in the history of the Padri War in Sumatra, which called for pure and original Islam.

The radical Islamic movement during the New Order era had different characteristics from previous periods. This movement was heavily influenced by the government's attitude towards Islam (the Muslims). So since the 1990s, there have been fundamental changes in format and strategy in radical Islamic movements that have appeared openly, as seen in the Laskar Jihad Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, Ikhwanul Muslimin, Jamaah Mujahidin, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), and Hizbut Tahrir movements. These movements displayed Islamic symbols and dared to use Islam as the basis for their organization. Their movements are also no longer rhetorical but concrete, such as military exercises and holding congresses to fight for Islamic law as the foundation of the state.²¹

Among these typologies, this fundamentalist radical Islamic movement consistently spreads ideology in educational spaces through social media, books, newsletters, and magazines. They vigorously proselytize through religious literature and target young urban Muslims.

Therefore, the ideology promoted by those mass organizations seeks to spread the understanding of religious purification to reject superstition (*tahayul*), heresy, and *khilafat* (myth), which still exist and become the culture of some Indonesian people. Furthermore, such movements also support the Islamic caliphate (*khilafa Islamiyya*) to solve the Indonesian nation's problems.²² They reject the laws made by man (secularism) by making the Qur'an and hadith the only source of law to solve human problems. It was here that this exclusive Islamic thought began to develop dynamically and diversely after the Reformation.

However, Sidik has a different typology from that of Al Zastrouw Ng to give an overview of the existence of post-Reformation Islamic thought. According to him, religious thought

²¹ Al-Zastrouw Ng, *Gerakan Islam Simbolik: Politik Kepentingan FPI*, 47.

²² Sidik, *Wajah Agama Media Islam Populer: Mengenal Majalah Islam Di Surakarta Dan Sekitarnya Pasca Reformasi* (Surakarta: IAIN Press, 2015), 12–13.

in post-Reformation Indonesia is divided into three thought patterns: substantialism, spiritualism, and spiritualism. First, substantialism religious thought has an understanding of moderate religious attitudes. It is receptive to religion, while secondly, ritualistic (scriptural) religious belief tends to have a radical or exclusive religious knowledge. It means that this thought rejects all reinterpretations and *ijtihad* of *ulama* in interpreting religious issues. However, Sidik also revealed that the word "radical" does not necessarily mean that the Islamic movement or group acts violently; sometimes, they articulate that understanding by spreading Salafi ideology into religious literature, such as Islamic family magazines, for mass public consumption. Third, spiritualistic religious thought combines religious concepts with Sufism values that develop in society's culture.²³

This genealogy of Islamic thought after the Reformation in Indonesia is an introduction to mapping the Islamic proselytizing movement through the media of religious literature in Indonesia. Najwa Abdullah & Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman stated that since the Reformation gave birth to freedom of the press, it has also encouraged the development of popular cultures, such as the presence of imported films, literature, and music, which Muslim activists regard as part of the representation of hedonistic lifestyles and products of secularization.²⁴ Media managers utilize this situation to demonstrate greater freedom of expression, especially for Muslims in Indonesia. At this point, anxiety and worry resulting from social change are increasingly articulated through the moral language of religion. As a result, the relationship between religious proselytizing and the media in everyday life is getting stronger.

Sugihartati, Suyanto, and Hidayat revealed in their research that Muslim students who gained an understanding of radicalism were channeled through organizations affiliated with religious fundamentalists. In their study, data taken from 700 students were

²³ Sidik, 14–15.

²⁴ Abdullah and Osman, "Islamisation in the Indonesian Media Spaces New Sites for a Conservative Push," 214.

distributed in seven universities, namely Institut Pertanian Bogor, Universitas Indonesia, Universitas Diponegoro, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Institut Teknologi Sepuluh November, Universitas Brawijaya, and Universitas Airlangga. The results obtained from this study are that there are three ways in which radicalism is distributed to students, namely: first, the public media is open, which can be used to communicate and transfer their ideological propaganda; second, the public media are closed, can be used to communicate to channel religious fundamentalist understanding in recruiting their new members; and third, media that is closed or conducted between persons and individuals to channel radical ideology.²⁵

This shows that media involvement as a means of religious proselytizing is increasingly abundant and popularizes Islamic iconography in the mass media. Islamic cultural commodities grew due to abundant Islamic novels, films, and soap operas with Islamic themes. This proselytizing medium grew exponentially and became a popular lifestyle reference for religious guidance; it can even be used to spread the doctrine of religious understanding among young people and children.

Hew Wai Weng said recently, in Indonesia, there had been an increase in proselytizing through sermons that are currently popular on social media. Social changes always mediate the fragmentation of the proselytizing media in the religious process. Therefore, it is important to explore how the transition from one mode of religious mediation to another has implications for the adoption of new mass media technologies.²⁶

Eickelman and Anderson state that new media, such as television and the internet (social media), can compete with print media, such as newspapers, magazines, books, and tapes, to

²⁵ Rahma Sugihartati, Bagong Suyanto, and Medhy Aginta Hidayat, "Channelization Strategies of Radicalism among Muslim University Students in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 309–34, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.2.309-334>.

²⁶ Hew Wai Weng, "The Art of Dakwah : Social Media , Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siau," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 9811 (2018): 61–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416757>.

expand the publication of Islamic ideas, social class identity, and religious discourse.²⁷

As a result of the various attachments between these Islamized practices, the form of mass media underwent a process of change from the type and style of Islamic consumerism. This gave birth to various sermons and an increase in religious authority. Of course, this diverse religious discourse starts from progressive and conservative Islamic understanding, from moderate and radical ones competing for proselytizing in online and offline spaces. So revealed Dayana Lengauer while researching "Islamic Society" in Bandung, West Java. The results of her study revealed Researching Islamic society in Bandung, Dayana revealed that the expression of the piety of Muslims in Bandung was influenced by digital technology as a proselytizing movement through the medium of spreading exclusive religious understanding. They built the "Takwa Spirit Community" to show how social media can influence the personal account, experience, commitment, and social engagement that define Muslim subjectivity. The sociality of understanding Islam in the digital space offers a new thing, namely orientation and capital to share "the spirit of piety," which is then attractive to and easily adopted by young people or millennials in metropolitan cities.²⁸

Movements such as the "Masyarakat Semangat Takwa" are inseparable from the Tarbiyah movement, which is the forerunner of the political party, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS).²⁹ A very influential Islamic party was driven by the idea of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood initiated by Hasan Al-Banna. Through the Tarbiyah movement that grew up on campuses in West Java, it produced publications on the purification of Islam through religious literature. It includes HTI, which began publishing

²⁷ Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, *New Media in The Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (United States of America: Indiana University Press, 1999), 45.

²⁸ Dayana Lengauer, "Sharing Semangat Taqwa: Social Media and Digital Islamic Socialities in Bandung," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 5–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1415276>.

²⁹ Abdullah and Osman, "Islamisation in the Indonesian Media Spaces New Sites for a Conservative Push," 218.

indictment media such as the "Jumat Al-Islam" bulletin and Al-Wa'ie magazine. Meanwhile, there is also the tabloid "Suara Islam," which Forum Umat Islam (FUI, the Islamic Community Forum) initiated to spread its views on Islamic thought. In addition to the growing publication of religious literature, the Islamic literacy community has also begun to grow to intensify Islamization in major cities in Indonesia. The Islamic community includes Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP), Mizan Amanah, Mujahidin Press, Komunitas Matapena, and Rohani Islam (Rohis, Spirituality of Islam).

Heidi J. Torres has also researched Islamic children's reading books that developed in the United States. He researched about 56 picture books as children's readings taught in schools. Torres wants to know if children can be influenced by the various ideologies of Islamism that grow and make it difficult for children to accept diversity, tolerance, and respect for differences. Whether they are exposed to the understanding of exclusivism directly through religious literature (Islamic literature) or not, it is essential to understand the message communicated in children's literature. Because children's reading (Islamic children's literature) is a critical access point for the younger generation to learn. Children's reading books are still the main medium used for teaching and information in the classroom. Children's literature can influence the attitudes and perspectives of its readers, both positively and negatively.³⁰

Examining the Proselytizing of Islamic Exclusivism in Popular Islamic Novels

One way to read the dynamics and shifts of Islamism is to look at the millennial generation map of Islamic literature. Noorhaidi Hasan et al., in their research, said that the role of Islamic literature in the seeding of Islamism among young people, especially students and college students, clearly cannot be ignored in this context. Islamic ideology generally infiltrates through

³⁰ Heidi J. Torres, "On the Margins: The Depiction of Muslims in Young Children's Picturebooks," *Children's Literature in Education* 47, no. 3 (2016): 191–208, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-015-9268-9>.

religious books and readings used in junior high school and high school education spaces, both in intra-curricular, curricular, and extra-curricular activities. In extracurricular activities such as Rohis (*Rohani Islam*), for example, the idea of the caliphate and sharia supremacy is more dominant and prominent in the discussion by referring to books by Islamic ideologues such as Hasan al-Banna, Abul A'la al-Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, Taqiy al-Din al Nabhani, etc.³¹ However, the development of Islamic literature also penetrated children's reading in urban and rural areas.

Educating students' character is significant and a function of education itself.³² Arifin stated that material about Islamic religious education must be taught to every child, from basic education to higher education in national education.³³ Therefore, Islamic religious education has a very urgent position and a significant role in forming a character of tolerance and peace-loving towards children so that they can respond to problems that disturb society, such as radicalism, terrorism, and the like, wisely. Indeed, it must be admitted that this problem continues to overshadow the younger generation of Indonesia until now. This is inseparable from actions such as terrorism, radicalism, intolerance, and persecution in the name of religion, which continue to occur in Indonesia so that the community has remembered it.³⁴

³¹ Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militansi, Dan Pencarian Identitas Di Indonesia Pasca-Orde Baru*, 15.

³²Eka Eka, "Revisiting Character Education from Islamic Perspective: A Quest For Character-Based Education in Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 21, no. 1 (2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v21i1.1156>.

³³ Syamsul Arifin, "Islamic Religious Education and Radicalism in Indonesia: Strategy of de-Radicalization through Strengthening the Living Values Education," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 93–126, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v6i1.93-126>.

³⁴ Subhan Hi Ali Dodego and Doli Witro, "Islamic Moderation as a Solution to Prevent Radicalism and Extremism Religious in Indonesia," *Dialog* 43, no. 2 (2020): 199–208, <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v43i2.375>; Betria Zarpina Yanti and Doli Witro, "Islamic Moderation as a Resolution of Different Conflicts of Religion," *Andragogi: Jurnal Diklat Teknis Pendidikan Dan Keagamaan* 8, no. 1 (2020): 446–57, <https://doi.org/10.36052/andragogi.v8i1.127>; Syamsu Rijal, "Radikalisme Kaum Muda Islam Terdidik Di Makassar," *Al-Qalam* 23, no. 2 (2017): 335–45, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v23i2.434>.

Abdallah stated that religious radicalism continues to develop and has gone so far as to label other groups of infidels, even to the point of committing violence. Such behaviors and actions in Islam are called *takfiri*. In March 2015 in Jombang, Gerakan Pemuda Anchor (the Anchor Youth Movement) found this kind of labeling of people in the worksheets of high school students. The worksheet annotates and explains the actions done to the mushrik to be killed, which read: "Only Allah can and should be worshipped, and those who worship other than Allah have become apostate and must be killed."³⁵

This Islamic pop novel generally contains stories of takwa guidance for children by introducing ordinances such as saying Subhanallah, Allahuakbar, dhikr-dhikr (*zikir-zikir*) after prayer, and others. Most of the sources used to tell the moral values of religion in this story are inseparable from the Qur'an and hadith. For example, in a children's book titled "*Dzikir-Dzikir Setelah Shalat: Bersumber dari Al-Qur'an dan Hadis Shahih*" (*Zikr After Prayer: Sourced from the Qur'an and valid hadith*) (2019) by Nizar Sa'ad Jabal. This book is trendy for Muslims because it has been reprinted eight times.³⁶ In the preface of this book, it is explained:

"Perisai Al-Qur'an (The Shield of the Qur'an) has published a series of worship services for children, consisting of selected prayers, *Mari Belajar Membersihkan* (Let's Learn to Clean), *Ayo Belajar Sholat* (Let's Learn to Pray), *Mari Zakat* (Come Zakat) by Nizar Sa'ad Jabal, and let's pray together. Alhamdulillah, this series of worship services received a very positive response from Muslim families. We present this book "*Dzikir-Dzikir Setelah Shalat*"³⁷ for Muslim children. We compiled this book based on the valid *hadith* sourced from the books of scholars discussing the issue of dhikr-dhikr after prayer. We present this book with full-color designs and illustrations to make it more attractive for children to read and memorize."

His massive production of children's books shows that the Islamic movement's da'wah movement through Islamic novels

³⁵ Abdallah Abdallah, "Exclusivism and Radicalism in Schools: State Policy and Educational Politics Revisited," *Studia Islamika* 23, no. 3 (2016): 625–32, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v23i3.4425>.

³⁶ Nizar Sa'ad Jabal, *Dzikir-Dzikir Setelah Shalat: Bersumber Dari Al-Quran Dan Hadits Shahih* (Jakarta: Perisai Qur'an, 2019), 1.

³⁷ Jabal, *Dzikir-Dzikir Setelah Shalat: Bersumber Dari Al-Quran Dan Hadits Shahih*.

instills not only Islamic ideology in children but also textual doctrines of religious knowledge. This paradigm can be observed from the reading sources of Islamic pop novels the Perisai Quran Kids publisher produced. The source of reference is always consistent only on the Al-Qur'an and hadith. In addition, in the narrative text of this Islamic novel, a conscious and open narrative of hatred towards non-Muslims emerges. For example, in the novel *Imam Kepada Kitab Allah* (2016), Ustaz Nizar Sa'ad Jabal wrote, "All of this shows the primacy of the Al-Qur'an. This is different from the previous books. Those previous books have been altered and replaced by unbelievers." Such narrations are openly conveyed to children as readers so that indirectly these narrations influence children to hate non-Muslims with different religious beliefs and understandings.



Picture 1. The Book *Dzikir-Dzikir Setelah Shalat: Bersumber dari Al-Qur'an dan Hadis Shahih*.³⁸

The book tells the story of a boy and girl named Ahmad and Fatimah. They are pious and pious children who always make pilgrimage after performing the five-time prayer. Not only that, but they also regularly listened to Ustad's advice after prayers. This is part of the lesson taught by the ustadz in the mosque to always remember Allah by praying all day long. According to the ustadz, dhikr is a command of the Prophet. In this children's reading book, the teaching of zikr is based on *hadith* narrated by Muslim imams, Bukhari, Abu Dawud-Tarmidzi and validated by

³⁸ Jabal.

Al-Albani in *Sahih wa Dhaif Sunan Abi Dawud*, *An-Nasaa'i in Amalul Yaumi Laila* and endorsed by Al-Albani in *Ash-Shahihah*. The substance of these hadiths makes it clear that children remember the dominion of Allah, glorify His oneness and remember the sins of man.

The language in this child's reading text feels so rigid, rigid, without dialogue from the figures presented to understand the aesthetic events of *dhikr* that show the contextualization of social problems in the child. According to the author, the publisher of *The Shield of the Qur'an* is ideologically inclined to follow the Muslim Brotherhood. This is seen when reading from a book relying only on the answer to the concept of *dhikr* only on the Qur'an and hadith, without ever attempting to perform *ijtihad* to reinterpret the verses of the Qur'an contextually. This may be part of doctrinalism to spread the Islamism (Salafi) movement by relying on religious literature. This view feels to have undergone a paradigmatic decline, that the change of times should be followed by the dynamics of religious interpretation that should be more flexible, rational, and actual.³⁹

This Islamic pop book or novel is growing and getting more exclusive when entering the State High School (SMA) level. The Rohis movement also has publications about Islamic literature that can influence young people who want to hijra. They began to learn again from the basics by learning worship prayers, practicing worship according to the *sunnah* (tradition) of the Prophet, and living according to the guidance of the Qur'an and hadith.⁴⁰ Hijra here is interpreted as an act carried out by a person migrating from a bad life in the past to a good life (Islamic) in the present.⁴¹

³⁹ Carl W. Ernst, *Pergulatan Islam Di Dunia Kontemporer: Doktrin Dan Peradaban* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2016), 37.

⁴⁰ Team Asatidzah TKIT, *Kumpulan Materi TPQ: Rohis SMAN 1 Gemolong* (Magelang: Rohis SMAN 1 Gemolong, 2015), 4.

⁴¹ Hadri Hasan, "Contemporary Religious Movement in Indonesia: A Study of Hijrah Festival in Jakarta in 2018," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 1 (2019): 230–65, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2019.13.1.230-265>; Yuyun Sunesti, Noorhaidi Hasan, and Muhammad Najib Azca, "Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah: Agency and Identity Negotiation," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 173–98, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v8i2.173-197>; M. Abzar Duraesa and Muzayyin Ahyar, "Islamic Popul[Ar]ism: Religious Popularism and Activism in

The idea of Islamism for some people is actually considered positive, but when it turns to be exclusive, rejecting diversity and intolerant of different opinions, it can certainly cause unrest, even the emergence of Islamophobia in society.⁴² For example, the themes of proselytizing they raise are generally about jihad, shirk (polytheism), apostasy, and Islamic sharia. For example, in the Islamic novel entitled *Iman Kepada Rasul* (2016) by Ustadz Nizar Sa'ad Jabal explains, "The Prophet invites his people to worship only Allah. The apostle forbade his people to commit shirk and associate partners with Allah. The description of shirk in this novel describes someone who comes to a shaman's place. The basic problem is that the clothes worn by the dukun are Javanese identity clothes. This shows that the narrations conveyed contain religious messages, but in terms of visibility, these narrations have a synchronization that rejects the existence of Islam mingling with culture.

This dogma then developed among young people when reading Islamic literature taught in urban educational spaces and penetrated rural areas.⁴³

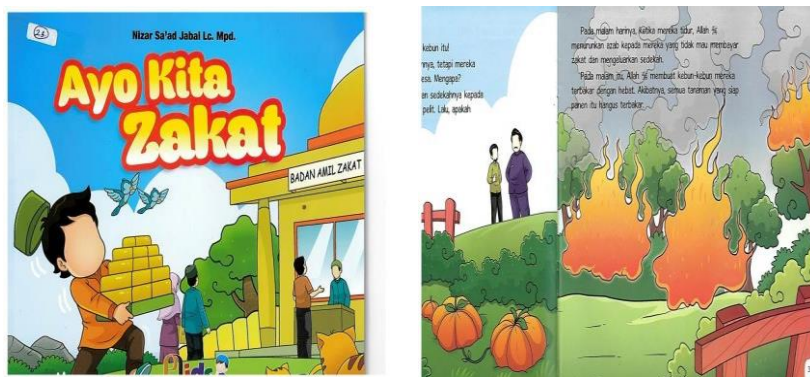
Overall, the Islamic pop novels described in this article contain religious beliefs related to aqidah. In this case, the creed provides a guiding principle for establishing religious law in the space of contemporary problems. So the concept of *tawhīd* (the oneness of God) is at the heart of the creed of the Salafist movement (Islamism). There are three important components on which the theory of this movement is based. First, God is the sole creator and ruler of the universe. This is the basis of the religion of tawhid,

the Yukngaji Community," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 9, no. 2 (2021): 503–34, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v9i2.7795>; Bambang Qomaruzzaman and Busro Busro, "Doing Hijrah Through Music: A Religious Phenomenon Among Indonesian Musician Community," *Studia Islamika* 28, no. 2 (August 19, 2021): 385–412, <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v28i2.13277>.

⁴² Doli Witro and Nurul Alamin, "Grounding Islam Moderation Through Social Media: A Form To Prevent Islamophobia in Indonesia," *Tatar Pasundan: Jurnal Diklat Keagamaan* 15, no. 2 (2021): 145–53, <https://doi.org/10.38075/tp.v15i2.230>.

⁴³ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (May 2006): 207–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100500497004>.

which is reflected in the creed or creed; Second, Allah is All-High for everything. He does not share characteristics or strengths with man and His creation. Therefore, the Qur'an calls Allah the supreme lawmaker, so man must follow sharia as a whole. It is clear that the Salafist movement rejects the concept of secularism⁴⁴; and Third, only God has the right to be worshipped. At this level, it is clear that Muslims should not fellowship with others in worshipping Allah. Such as the prohibition of praying to charismatic religious figures as intermediaries with Allah because this is seen as worship other than Allah (shirk). This similarity is summarized in the book *Anak Pintar, Belajar Rukun Iman: Iman Kepada Rasul* (Smart Children Learn the Pillars of Faith: Faith in the Apostle) by Nizar Sa'ad Jabal.⁴⁵ The Qur'an and hadith outline the rules that must govern every aspect of human beliefs and behavior. As a result, every deed is worshiped if it is by Islamic law. Therefore, the Salafist movement argues that Muslims should strictly follow the Qur'an and hadith as absolute guidelines to protect tawhid. As well as all the stories published by the publisher Shield of the Qur'an.



Picture 2. Book cover *Ayo Kita Zakat* by Nizar Sa'ad Jabal.⁴⁶

The book *Ayo Kita Zakat* by Nizar Sa'ad Jabal also bears similarities with other books published by Perisai Al-Quran. The

⁴⁴ Wiktorowicz, 209.

⁴⁵ Nizar Sa'ad Jabal, *Anak Pintar, Belajar Rukun Iman: Iman Kepada Rasul* (Jakarta: Perisai Qur'an, 2016), 7.

⁴⁶ Nizar Sa'ad Jabal, *Ayo Kita Zakat* (Jakarta: Perisai Qur'an, 2017).

discussion of stories about the basics of Islam is by telling stories sourced from the Qur'an and hadith. In general, the discussion of this book tells the story of a conglomerate that owns vegetable and fruit plantations that are ready for harvest. However, the garden owner does not want the harvest from his garden to be known by most poor villagers. Understandably, the garden owner has a stingy nature, does not want to share, and does not want to issue zakat. Because of the greed of the garden owner, God punished him by burning the land belonging to the conglomerate before harvesting. Allah gave the punishment because the garden owner was greedy and did not want to issue zakat and alms.⁴⁷

The story is based on the Qur'an from al-Qalam: 17-33. Ultimately, the conglomerate cried and regretted his actions, so he repented to God. The story of doom and zakat can be a lesson for children to share, but it feels strange if God instantly punishes a stingy person. That's not to say here is the impossibility nor the possibility, but this example does not teach children to imagine and play with the logic that God also has a merciful nature, which God previously gave warnings that might be able to give the stingy rich man a touching-heart story. At that time, did God punish His servants? All the content of the story from the publishers such as Perisai Al-Qur'an, As-Salam Kids, Kids Tauhid.or.id, and Perpustakaan Imam asy-Syafi'i share the similarity that these proselytization media affiliate with a Salafi group that wants to present a story with a textualist-ethnocentrism nuance.

In his research, Maulana reveals that educators (teachers) are the spearhead in the context of Indonesia and Islam in providing an understanding of tolerance values to students so that later they can be applied in the social realm. Therefore, every educator must have an attitude of tolerance and inclusiveness because they are the ones who have the closest relationship with students. Educators have the role of interpreting religious texts and explaining them to students to obtain an understanding of the text. In Indonesia, the cause of the increasing understanding of radicalism in schools is errors in understanding religious texts,

⁴⁷ Jabal, 1-3.

which are translated rigidly, exclusively, and closed. This is in line with the research conducted by Pusat Penelitian Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM, Center for Islamic and Society Research) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in 2008, cited by Maulana, which found that teachers (educators) in public schools have an exclusive and conservative religious understanding.⁴⁸

In 2017, the same research was carried out by the same institute with an expanded scope to include students, students, teachers, and lecturers in 34 provinces in Indonesia. The result shows that college students and students tend to be intolerant of religious views, with the percentage of external prejudiced opinions at 34.3%, internal intolerance opinions at 51.1%, and radical opinions at 58.5%.⁴⁹

The government and parents must recognize and pay attention to the emerging seeds of radicalism and intolerance that students have at school. Therefore, teaching proper religious understanding becomes urgent and has the potency to stem the sense of radicalism in students. Schools also have to be selective in choosing teachers to prevent the spread of the understanding of radicalism to the student.⁵⁰

An interview about religious literature and understanding was conducted with several teachers of TPQ who daily teach Qur'anic recitation. PK, a teacher, prefer to select various reading Islamic pop novels as reading on TPQ Al- Mukmin Keyongan because they do not have facial illustration. According to him, a hadith forbids people from drawing the living creature. Muslims use this basis to have a theocentric understanding that Muslims are prohibited from drawing the face of living creatures. Regardless of the debate among previous scholars, he chooses to

⁴⁸ Dirga Maulana, "The Exclusivism of Religion Teachers: Intolerance and Radicalism in Indonesian Public Schools," *Studia Islamika* 24, no. 2 (2017): 395–401, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v24i2.5707>.

⁴⁹ Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) UIN Jakarta, *Api Dalam Sekam: Keberagaman Gen Z (Survei Nasional Tentang Sikap Keberagamaan Di Sekolah Dan Universitas Di Indonesia)* (Jakarta: UIN Jakarta, 2017), 3.

⁵⁰ M. A. Hermawan, "Nilai Moderasi Islam Dan Internalisasinya Di Sekolah," *Insania* 25, no. 1 (2020): 32, <https://doi.org/10.24090/insania.v25i1.3365>.

take the opinion that rejects fine art (painting) rather than looking for root genealogy debate art appearance in Islam.⁵¹

The same interview was conducted with SA, a teacher. The results show a similar understanding. He says he likes pop novels as children's reading because they are sourced from Prophet's hadith. Besides, he evaluates that Muslims are not allowed to draw resembling living creatures in the hadith. SA says that those Islamic pop novels are far more careful because they use no face, and thus, they are careful to stay away from the fine art that the hadith has prohibited.⁵²

This phenomenon could be traced back to the that all characters are represented with no face in all book contents of various Islamic book publishers. According to the *Salafi* movement, drawing is *generally haram* (illegal), so illustrators tend not to show every character's face in children's books. According to Dony Ekasaputra at *Republika.co.id*, there are four reasons why drawing is prohibited. First, the drawing process could be analogized and considered an attempt to match God's creation. It is based on a divine hadith (*al-ḥadīṣ al-Qudṣī*) that "no one which is more unjust (*ẓālim*) than who deliberately creates (something) like My creation." This Hadith is quoted from the Tanwirul Afkar bulletin.⁵³ Dony explains that this hadith denotes and refers to textuality, which is used as a basic law. If this hadith is used as a basic law to ban drawing the living creature, it also seems to penetrate the drawing process of other things, such as trees and mountains. From that problem, different opinions among scholars appear regarding the law of drawing, where some scholars allow it, and others forbid it. However, this law cannot be violated among the Salafi movement that wants to purify religious understanding by referring to the Qur'an and Hadith. Second, the

⁵¹ PK, *Guru Ngaji Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ) Al-Muk'min Keyongan* (Kecamatan Plupuh, Kabupaten Sragen: Wawancara melalui Whatsapp, 23 Februari, 2022).

⁵² SA, *Guru Ngaji Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ) Al-Muk'min Keyongan* (Kecamatan Plupuh, Kabupaten Sragen: Wawancara melalui Whatsapp, 24 Februari, 2022).

⁵³ Muhyiddin and Muhammad Hafil, "Benarkan Menggambar Diharamkan?," *Republika.Co.Id*, n.d.

painter will get a very painful punishment. The basic argument is also the hadith. Third, painting or pictures will hurt angels visiting a Muslim's home. The origin is based on a hadith like "Angel is reluctant to enter the house or the room which has an image inside." Fourth, drawing is considered to resemble the customs of the unbelievers. Doni says, painting is *jāhiliya* tradition. Thus, the assumption built is that every painting painted by a painter is regarded as resembling the will of God. It reaches the habit of imagination that produces statues that are ever considered as God in the time of *jāhiliyya*, so the Prophet forbade it. However, it cannot be denied that time has always changed and developed. Similarly, Islamic art has grown so prominent in the history of Islamic civilization. Since the fast-spreading expansion of the Arabs, new big cities began to exist during the Umayyad dynasty. Cities like Basra, Kufa, Fusthat, Wash it, Qairawan, and others have Roman architectural styles that can be observed in architectural forms of mosques, tombs, schools, houses, palaces, and others.⁵⁴

Whereas the development of art in the Islamic world was very appreciated, particularly during the golden age of Islamic civilization. Even art in the Islamic world was very influential, even though it could indirectly influence European culture. Paintings made by leading painters like Rembrandt, Holbein, and Leonardo da Vinci sometimes are copied pictures or inspired by Eastern motifs. The influence of Islam on European art painting looks clearly in art schools in Siena, Pisa, and Venice. Such influence can also be seen in the works of several European painters during Renaissance and periods after. The impact of Arab achievement on the evolution and development of architecture and art in Europe is real, covering various aspects and lasting for centuries. The influence is real, especially in Spain, where many Mudejares craftsmen practiced Andalusian (or now Spanish) skill tradition to conserve art culture and painting of the East.

Those influences also spread in Western European countries, reaching the center of Byzantine art in Eastern Europe. It occurred

⁵⁴ Komisi Nasional Mesir untuk UNESCO, *Sumbangan Islam Kepada Ilmu Dan Kebudayaan* (Bandung: Pustaka, 1986), 330.

around the beginning of the 10th century. In certain fields, the influence could be seen throughout the Middle Ages, even until modern times.

Structuralism Semiotic Analysis of Popular Islamic Novel

It is necessary to analyze the non-facial picture in children's books using the structuralism semiotic approach to understanding signs in human life through a scientific approach. This article borrows Gill Branston and Roy Stafford's view that the phenomenon of illustration in such a medium can be analyzed through semiotics and content.⁵⁵ Semiotics is a theory of signs to generate meaning or the study of how things come to have significance. This includes signs designed to convey meaning.

At the same time, semiotics and the theory of structuralism are used here for analysis. Semiotics is built in and by different languages and cultures. This approach tries to 'hold' the question about the value of other stories or pictures to explore how meaning is built. Some, though not all, develop such theories to confirm that because humans build meaning, it could be changed progressively. Structuralism is a critical analysis approach that emphasizes the universal structure underlying different surfaces and the randomness of cultures, stories, media texts, etc. Semiotics is defined as a study of signs or production of social meaning and entertainment through the system of signs or a study of how something has significance. In the developing versions, this social aspect social is emphasized by mentioning such studies as 'social semiotics.'

Of course, Islamic books have an implied meaning as children's reading. The growing discourse became the main reason for the *Salafi* movement to reject any image because it is illegal and not recommended. However, if the text is read using analytical discourse, the text also has ideological and power influence. If Islamic literary media can control the way children think psychologically to introduce the Islamism movement if they are massively consumed. Control here does not always have to be

⁵⁵ Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, *The Media Student 's Book* (London and New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 55.

physical and direct, but also mental or psychic control. Islamic books offer these ideas as children's reading and influence religious understanding that develops in metropolitan cities in Indonesia.

According to Peter Pericles Trifonas, an illustrated text will achieve its visual existence through color settings, values, and visual texts, such as lexical text, which can be examined according to the syntactic elements of its construction.⁵⁶ To facilitate the analysis of how visual texts function well at the microstructural and macrostructural levels in creating potential markers through the separation and arrangement of color and value in the visual field and semiotic methodology. It can be used to identify and explain how visual text signs and codes interact with the awareness of seeing the text that has the potential to actualize the symbols in the image.

Semiotics in religious studies can achieve a broader elaboration of language, not only focusing on remotivating strategies of religious language, considering the pragmatic dimensions of the sacred language, strength, and efficacy with semantics. But the system shows that the basics of the semiotic view have an arbitrary paradox.⁵⁷ This shows that Islamic pop novels can be observed, analyzed, and interpreted by the semiotics embedded in certain ideologies. Massimo Leone quotes Robert Yelle in the book *Semiotics of Religion*, that the view of semiotics can be deconstructed with externalism and universalism approaches to meanings in religious literature. This will show that the results of Yelle's observations have three basic goals; first, semiotics placed in religious literature will have meanings. Second, semiotics in religious literature can develop cross-cultural discourses with certain ideological linkages. Third, semiotics in

⁵⁶ Peter Pericles Trifonas, "The Semiotics of Visual Perception and the Autonomy of Pictorial Text: Toward a Semiotic Pedagogy of the Image," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 53, no. 7 (2020): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1761329>.

⁵⁷ Massimo Leone, "The Semiotics of Innovation," in *International Handbook of Semiotics* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2015), 377–88, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9404-6_17.

religious literature has an authoritative understanding of religious fatwas.

Like what was conveyed in Jeppe Sinding Jensen's idea, which understands that religion is a phenomenon that has a very par excellence semiotic relationship. Religion has a strong power over various historical sign processes, so the presence of semiotics must play an important role in investigating the descent of religion or messages in religion.⁵⁸ Thus, studying semiotics is indispensable in understanding religion as a social phenomenon in the human environment. So in this era of post-modernism, especially the depiction and use of media about Islam have the subjectivity of certain groups of Islamic understanding.

Heidi J. Torres, while researching children's literature on Islam in America, said that Islamic media has a single vision that often focuses on exclusivist preaching. This causes the media indictment of Islam to only focus on "a grossly unbalanced representation." It means that the unclear representation of images and signs from children's reading can create an understanding of Islam associated with terrorism, violence, irrationality, and extreme fundamentalism. This view is based on the majority of ordinary people who do not want to study classical and contemporary Islamic literature, which has developed in the study of Western and Eastern knowledge.⁵⁹

The idea of analyzing the reading of children's literary texts above actually has similarities to various children's readings: popular Islamic novels that developed in Indonesia. The relevance of reading Islamic reading texts can affect children's image of the media, which is increasing among Muslims who can display the values of tolerance and diversity. However, the social problems that occur, various Islamic groups in Indonesia are contesting the "understanding" of Islam, which can be said to be an exclusive, inclusive, and pluralist Islamic understanding, which can directly explain the message of da'wah in the media, especially in Islamic

⁵⁸ Jeppe Sinding Jensen, "Semiotics of Religion: Once Lost - and Now Found," *Religion* 44, no. 1 (2014): 131, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2013.868630>.

⁵⁹ Torres, "On the Margins: The Depiction of Muslims in Young Children's Picturebooks," 124.

pop novels as reading child. Therefore, it is essential to understand the messages "communicated" to all children who read religious literature. This is because religious literature (Islamic children's literature) is a critical access point for teenagers to learn about something, especially religious ideology. This is what causes religious literature to positively or negatively impact its readers.

Umberto Eco explains that the semiotic theory can explain every sign function with the underlying system of elements correlated with one or more codes. General semiotics must consider signs and codes, which of course, consider various phenomena such as the use of language in general, the evolution of codes, and aesthetic communication. Multiple types of interactional communication behavior that use signs can influence one's thinking.⁶⁰ About Islamic media (religious literature), there is a measuring point in the systematic study of narratives in modern media. First, the media must be able to use narratives to state various stories determined by a specific religious understanding. Second, the media can also be a tool for fragmenting Islamic exclusivism da'wah.⁶¹

This theory asserts that meaning can be built and changed progressively by humans. Semiotics is the study of "signs" that can produce significant signs in social life. This makes it clear that in the da'wah media, especially in religious literature, a literacy contestation targets children to instill the ideology of Islamism. This view has relevance in the study of poststructuralism and cognitivism which can then be considered thinking reflecting wider political, social, religious, and cultural contestations. The historicity of the intellectual conflict between poststructuralism and cognitivism is a starting point in showing disagreement in the depiction of thought from both sides, which is centered on religious ideology.⁶²

⁶⁰ Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and London, 1976), 3.

⁶¹ Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, *The Media Student's Book* (London and New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 55.

⁶² Robert Geal, "Theory Is Always for Someone and for Some Purpose': Thinking through Post-Structuralism and Cognitivism," *New Review of Film and*

The religious literature that has flourished in popular post-reform novels also displays the semiotics of signs, arts, and debates on religious fatwas. The understanding of religious conservatism seriously rejects the presence of art, with many Salafi scholars labeling the fatwa "haram" or firmly rejecting it. This is as continuous as the religious literature they produce to show the consistency of their disapproval of art, which in the historical record of the progress of Islam in Andalusia or Europe is highly respected and preserved. From the view of Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, the phenomenon of illustration in this media (Islamic pop novel), which developed after the Reformation in Indonesia, concluded that an analysis of religious literature had been produced to spread the ideology of Islamism. The movement of this da'wah media is so massive. It has influenced the religious views of Indonesian children at the level of formal and non-formal education for the mission of planting the da'wah movement of Islamism.

Conclusion

Since the Reformation, the propaganda media for Islamic literature has developed so strongly in spreading the doctrines of the Salafi-Wahhabi movement and the Muslim Brotherhood in the education space. This movement uses dakwah media in books, bulletins, magazines, and children's Islamic pop novels to influence urban Muslim youth's religious thinking and ideology in Indonesia. Dozens of publishers of religious books only talk about jihad, morality, Islamic law, punishment, sin, and hijrah. The mission of the story in this Islamic pop reading is to bring the doctrine to purify the teachings of Islam so that it returns to the Qur'an and hadith, as well as being a solution to social problems.

This is found in children's reading books published by Perisai Qur'an Kids in Jakarta dan As-Salam Kids in Surakarta, Pustaka Imam asy-Syafi'i, dan Kids Tauhid.or.id. The stories in the book tell the basics of Islam, such as Faith in Allah, Faith in the Messenger of Allah, and so on—which always quote hadith and

verses from the Qur'an. In the famous Islamic novel, there are rarely stories related to the acceptance of diversity, the value of tolerance, and mutual respect between religious communities. This could change religious understanding in children's reading to be exclusive. These media and reading materials are very influential on the growth and development of children's religious thoughts in the education room in the metropolitan city.

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