

# Islam on the air: the struggle for Salafism through radio in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Indonesian Islam has become the point of contestation of ideologies, particularly between the so-called globally-inspired and locally- rooted views of Islam. This article deals with the Salafism struggle in da'wah on the airwaves through the radio as locally rooted in Indonesia with a special reference to the Salafi radio highly popular in Batam of Riau, Hang Radio. It analyzes two main issues,

first on the growth of religious thinking in Indonesian Islam and its relationship with media propaganda, and second on the Salafi struggle for Islamic identity by means of broadcasting through radio. It argues that through the radio the Salafists implement their ideology as part of their socio-religious identity in a public sphere. Through a hermeneutical-phenomenology analysis, this article finds that the Salafism struggle of Islamic identity by means of radio is fragmented rather than cohesive and solid. Moreover, this struggle is not immune to capitalism. Above all, this struggle is also influenced by transnational and local elements.

Islam Indonesia telah menjadi topik kontestasi ideologi, khususnya antara pandangan tentang Islam yang terinspirasi global dan pandangan yang berakar dari lokal. Artikel ini fokus pada perjuangan dakwah kelompok Salafi melalui Radio di Batam Riau yakni Hang Radio. Artikel ini menganalisis dua isu utama, pertama tentang perkembangan pemikiran keagamaan di Indonesia dan hubungannya dengan propaganda media, dan kedua tentang perjuangan identitas Islam Salafi melalui radio. Artikel ini menjelaskan bahwa melalui radio kelompok Salafi mengimplementasikan ideologi mereka sebagai bagian dari identitas sosial-keagamaannya di ruang publik. Melalui analisis hermeneutis-fenomenologi, artikel ini menemukan bahwa perjuangan identitas Islam Salafi melalui radio lebih terfragmentasi ketimbang kohesif dan solid. Apalagi perjuangan ini tidak kebal terhadap kapitalisme. Lebih dari itu, perjuangan ini juga dipengaruhi oleh unsur transnasional dan lokal.

**Keywords:** *Da'wah* Radio, Islamic Identity, Salafism, Indonesian Islam

## **Introduction**

Many methods and media have been made use of in conducting the *da'wah* by both the globally-inspired and locally-rooted ideologies of Islam. Salafism, as an example of a globally-inspired ideology of Islam, has developed several media for the *da'wah*, not only through in-person religious learning but also technologically facilitated instruments, including exclusively radio.<sup>1</sup> This can be seen in different parts of the Islamic world.

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<sup>1</sup>Mukhlis Rahmanto, "Rowing In The Flow of Khalaf; Indonesian Salafism Response

In Nigeria, for example, Salafism under the leadership of Abubakar Gumi has been employing the preaching by means of radio since 1967.<sup>2</sup> In Tunisia, Salafism developed a local radio station for Islamic preaching and the so-called revolutionary identity struggle.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, radio is also made use of to signify the struggle for Egyptian nationalism-based Islamic ideology, as exemplified by a Moroccan exiled in Nazi Germany, Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, by maximizing preaching activities through shortwave radio.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, radio has been used to provide local people with “an alternative source of information” occasionally produced by the majority of media enterprises which puts a negative stigma on Muslims, particularly those having a close ideological connection to Salafism such as those Muslims of ethnic Chechens in Georgia, as being terrorists.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Salafi radios are not monolithic because, as Sunarwoto shows in his research in Surakarta, Central Java, there is the internal dynamism on these radios. There are three Salafi radios in Surakarta which have competed in gaining legitimacy for their position within the Salafi *da'wah* movement.<sup>6</sup> Chris Chaplin, however, does not focus on Salafi radios. Instead, he discusses the way in which Salafists shape the nature and interpretation of citizenship by focusing on Wahdah Islamiyah, a Salafi organisation with over 120

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Towards Contemporary Islamic Economics”, *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, Volume 7, Number 4 (2019), 969. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.74132>.

<sup>2</sup>Alex Thurston, “Abubakar Gumi’s *al’Aqida al-Saḥīha bi-Muwafaqat al-Shari’a*: Global Salafism and Locally Oriented Polemics in a Northern Nigerian Text”, *Islamic Africa*, Volume 2, Number 2 (2011), 12. <https://doi.org/10.5192/21540993020209>

<sup>3</sup>Justin Qi, “Rap & Revolution: From The Arab Spring to ISIL and Beyond,” *Harvard International Review*, Volume 40, Number 2 (2019), 22-23.

<sup>4</sup>Henri Lauzière, “Islamic Nationalism through the Airwaves: Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī’s Encounter with Shortwave Radio, 1937–39”, *Die Welt des Islams*, Volume 56, Number 1 (2016), 6-33.

<sup>5</sup>Mariam Amashukeli, *En/Countering Stigma of Terrorism: The Case of Pankisi*, Tbilisi: Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility, 2018, 8-9.

<sup>6</sup>Sunarwoto, “Salafi Dakwah Radio : A contest for religious authority,” *Archipel* 91 (2016), 203-230.

branches in Indonesia.<sup>7</sup>

To add an analysis of Islamic ideology of Salafism as globally inspired and developed as such, this article deals with Salafism struggle in *da'wah* on the airwaves through the local radio in Indonesia. It focuses on Salafi radio highly popular in Batam of Riau, Hang Radio. Characteristically, Hang Radio controlled certain segments by bringing Salafi religious understandings.<sup>8</sup> This is different from other Salafi radios in Central Java, East Java and South Sulawesi. The differences can be seen from the local context in which Hang Radio is managed. Batam is an industrial city having a heterogonous society. Its population is plural due to the coming of many people from Java, Sumatra and other locations. This article aims to elaborate further on the struggle for Islamic identity carried out by Hang Radio. This Islamic identity struggle is related to the question of how to be a Muslim amidst modernization, secularization and globalization that could weaken the spirituality of the Batam Muslim community. By using hermeneutic phenomenology analysis, the data from observations and interviews are interpreted to understand the struggles of Islamic identities carried out by Hang Radio in Batam City so that the *da'wah* struggle can be understood.

This article explains two main parts. *First*, on religious understanding growth in Indonesia and its relationship with media propaganda. It is necessary to have a closer look historically at important matters on what has happened in Indonesia linked to the emergence of religious thought and how the media respond to this propaganda. *Second*, about the struggle

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<sup>7</sup>Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism : Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia", *Citizenship Studies*, Volume 22, Number 2 (2018), 208-223.

<sup>8</sup>Media Zainul Bahri, "Islamisme Terselubung" Versus Moderat Islam: Mencermati Geliat Radio-Radio Dakwah di Batam", in Din Wahid and Jamhari Makruf (eds.) *Suara Salafisme: Radio Dakwah di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Prenadamedia Grup, 2017, 11-60.

for Islamic identity carried out by Hang Radio, this part deals with the issue of how the radio can play the role of propaganda in the public sphere and how this radio uses religious symbols to strengthen a certain Islamic identity, as well as how the ideology of the so-called *da'wah* radio attracts public attention.

### **The ideological contestation and the rise of *da'wah* radio**

Currently, Indonesia is home to multiple Islamic ideologies. Each Islamic ideology is disseminated through media and organization. This brings an ideological contestation. The ideological contestation within Muslim communities can be traced back to Prophet Muhammad's era when Muslims at that time were involved in a heated debate as to who was worthy of being the substitute for Prophet Muhammad's leadership. Interpretation and understanding of different religious teachings are not only related to politics, but also to legal issues which give birth to many schools of Islamic law (*fiqh*),<sup>9</sup> theology (*kalam*), and Sufism along with its *tariqah* (Sufi Order).

Diverse religious ideas later became the foundation and the world view of various Muslim communities in Indonesia. However, the choice of the Muslim community towards religious ideas that are characterized by Shafi'iyah in the field of law turns out to be a majority compared to other understandings. Likewise the choice tendency towards the practice of the *tariqah mu'tabarah* (recognized Sufi Order) is far more desirable than the *ghairu mu'tabarah* (non-recognized Sufi Order), especially the Qadiriyyah and Naqshabandiyah orders. In the archipelago, religious beliefs (*aqeedah*) relating to human relations with Allah are much influenced by the teachings of theology (*kalam*) developed by al-Imam al-Ash'ari

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<sup>9</sup>Muhammad Harfin Zuhdi, "Tipologi Pemikiran Hukum Islam : Pergulatan Pemikiran dari Tradisionalis hingga Liberalis", *Ulumuna: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, Volume 16, Number 1 (2012), 43-45.

and al-Imam al-Maturidi compared to Mu'tazilah or Jabariyah. The religious view based on the Shafi'i schools of thought practiced by the Qadiriyyah and Naqshabandiyah orders and this Ash'ariyah theology was later called the followers of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah.<sup>10</sup> In Indonesia, this term is more popularly referred to as "Indonesian Islam." The use of the term "Indonesian Islam" tends to be differentiated from the term "Islam in Indonesia." Azyumardi Azra suggests that the choice of the term Indonesian Islam shows that "Muslims in Indonesia believe in the same pillars of Islam, but in the embodiment of the social life of Islamic culture and has its own distinctions which are not found anywhere else in the Muslim World."<sup>11</sup>

Along with its self-representation as the site of Islamic ideological contestation, Indonesian Islam has witnessed the rise of non-in-person *da'wah* activities, particularly those through airwaves. The rise of non-in-person *da'wah* activities means that there has been the growth of *da'wah* activities done on media, namely social media (YouTube, Facebook, Whatsapp), television, and radio. To get a better sense of a sociological context of this phenomenon, the dynamics of state-Islam relations deserves thorough attention. Since the era of information and political openness after the collapse of the New Order in 1998, the religious understanding of Muslim communities in Indonesia, which Martin van Bruinessen calls "conservative turn", grows and develops.<sup>12</sup> The conservative turn refers to the rise of conservative Muslims in Indonesia identified by the

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<sup>10</sup>See Richard C. Martin and Mark R. Woodward, and Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol*, Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 1997.

<sup>11</sup>Azyumardi Azra, "Islam Indonesia: Kontribusi Pada Peradaban Global," *Prisma*, vol. 29, no. 04 (2010), 83.

<sup>12</sup>Martin van Bruinessen, "Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the "Conservative Turn" of the Early Twenty-first Century", in Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2013, 1-20.

presence of radical Muslim groups such as the FPI (Islamic Defenders Front) especially after the New Order period.

The emergence of various religious understandings as mentioned above seems to be driven by the interaction of local Muslim community with the global Muslim community competing in winning trust of the Muslim community.<sup>13</sup> Contestation of religious ideology can be seen from the radio. In the Muslim community there is an attempt to show Islamic identity in the public sphere as well as to communicate with its followers<sup>14</sup>, including by radio in Batam. In the industrial city of Batam with its so-called hybrid cultural character, Salafi religious understanding has been strengthened along with the emergence of Hang radio as one of the *da'wah* radios.

More than that, the presence of *da'wah* radio has sociologically a close connection to the local context of the representation of Islamic identity. Sunarwoto explains that the proliferation of *da'wah* radio in Surakarta is not free from Islamic identity diversity in Surakarta.<sup>15</sup> The growing presence of *da'wah* radio has impacted women in that they have a growing access to religious learning more widely than the conventional religious learning activities so far. Irzum fariyah assumes that radio has become important to mediate *da'wah* to reach a community of women.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>See also Didik Novi Rahmanto, Adrianus Eliasta Meliala, Ferdinand Andi Lolo, "Ideology Deconstruction of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Returnees in Indonesia", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 10, Number 2 (2020), 381-408. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i2.381-408>

<sup>14</sup>Nurhaya Muchtar and Jeffrey A Ritchey, "Preaching, Community, and Convergence: Use of Old and New Media by Progressive Indonesian Islamic Leaders", *The International Communication Gazette*, Volume 76, Number 4-5 (2014), 360-376. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1748048514524099>

<sup>15</sup>Sunarwoto, "Dakwah Radio in Surakarta: A Contest for Islamic Identity", in Jajat Burhanuddin & Kees van Djik (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013, 195-214.

<sup>16</sup>Irzum Fariyah, "Radio sebagai Solusi Problem Keagamaan Muslimah," *At-Tabsyir*, Volume 2, Number 2 (2014), 137-156.

## Hang Radio amongst the growing phenomenon of *da'wah*

Many kinds of *da'wah* radio in Indonesia have been growing since the fall of the New Order regime.<sup>17</sup> In July 2014, the Association of Indonesian Islamic Radio and Television published that there were 58 *da'wah* radios in Indonesia.<sup>18</sup> Hang Radio for example was founded in 2002 in Batam at Batam Center Mall in Batam City and had 4 employees. This illustrates that freedom of information during the reform period contributed to the development of *da'wah* radio. The purpose of developing *da'wah* is accommodated by government regulations that encourage freedom of information thus it is easier to establish *da'wah* radio.<sup>19</sup> In this context, internal factors such zeal to spread the Islamic *da'wah* and external factors in the form of freedom of information play an important role in the development of *da'wah* radio in Batam. In 2021, the population of Batam is 1.617.168. In fact, in 1950, its population was only 46.962.<sup>20</sup> The standard of basic income in Batam in 2021 is Rp. 4.150.930.<sup>21</sup> The number of foreign companies in Batam is 537.<sup>22</sup> Referring to the 2019 Central Statistics Agency (BPS) data released in 2020, Batam was the richest city in the Sumatra region. Its per capita revenue was Rp. 119.33 million/year.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Muhammad Risantoso, Robeet Thadi, and Moch Iqbal, "Klasifikasi Pesan Dakwah pada Radio Siaran L-Baas 97,6 FM," *Jurnal Dawuh*, Volume 1, Mumber 1 (2020), 34-39.

<sup>18</sup><https://seindahsunnah.com/kabar-islam/daftar-radio-dan-tv-lokal-atau-internet-islami-se-indonesia/> accessed on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 at 01.57 PM.

<sup>19</sup>Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere", *Contemporary Islam*, Volume 3, Number 3 (2009), 229-250.

<sup>20</sup><https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/batam-population> accessed on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 at 04.12 PM.

<sup>21</sup><https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/11/24/21210891/umk-2021-kepri-ditetapkan-tertinggi-di-batam-terendah-di-tanjungpinang> accessed on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 at 04.20 PM.

<sup>22</sup><https://batampos.co.id/2020/07/02/terbaru-segini-jumlah-perusahaan-asing-di-kota-batam-sekarang/> accessed on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 07.39 AM.

<sup>23</sup><https://www.goodnewsfromindonesia.id/2021/02/25/kalahkan-medan-batam-jadi-kota-paling-makmur-di-region-sumatra> accessed on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 07.45 AM.



Batam is very close to Singapore. Some places in Singapore can even be seen from the hills in Batam.<sup>24</sup>

The trajectory of Hang Radio as a *da'wah* radio originated from the path of “repentance”. This radio station used to be like other kinds of urban radio attached to the identity of the juvenile. The broadcast programs were filled with pop music entertainment. However, financial problems became a turning point for this radio station to replace the so-called “wrong” mission to the so-called “missionary” mission. The radio did not get profit so it was bankrupt. The owner then thought that it was due to the content of the radio programs which were not suitable with Islamic values. Furthermore, the owner received financial assistance from a donor. The donor convinced the owner of this radio station to change the direction of the radio to the so-called “right” road. For the owner, this was God’s “rebuke” for the good of himself and the people. Then, the owners approved the change request and the mission of the broadcast program. Hang Radio is still used as a symbol of Malay which is synonymous with Islam. Hang Radio, according to the owner of the radio, Zein Alatas,<sup>25</sup> is a name that precisely describes the spirit of the great Malays of the past such as Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat. Now with 9 employees, Hang Radio is increasingly stable in finance. For Zein Alatas, “When used for profit, this radio was closed for a long time. We live and develop due to the donations from Muslims who care about our missionary mission.”<sup>26</sup> Alatas argues that the names of the people who donated are not important. What needs to be underlined is that the struggle of *da'wah* will not be a loss or ‘bankrupt’ because God will not be silent to provide

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<sup>24</sup><https://www.batamnews.co.id/berita-35136-3-lokasi-mengintip-megahnya-singapura-dari-batam.html> accessed on October 4th, 2021 at 07.50 AM.

<sup>25</sup>Interview with Zein Alatas, Riau, 14 September 2017.

<sup>26</sup>Interview with Zein Alatas, Riau, 14 September 2017.

financial conveniences for those who are consistent in preaching.<sup>27</sup>

The location of Hang Radio is right in the center of the crowds of Batam. It is located inside a trade or shopping complex. This reflects a “marriage” between Islam and capitalism. Shops and trade are symbols of capitalism while Hang Radio is a symbol of Islamic media that has a mission to preach. This is due to the fact that, according to Inaya Rakhmani when discussing Islam in Indonesian television series, “rather than militant groups determined to establish Sharia-based regimes, the intelligentsia is using Western technology and education to push for democracy all the while rejecting its superiority over Islamic moral values.”<sup>28</sup> The strategy of selecting locations in the crowd of Batam cities has become a kind of ‘stepping stone’ for the development of wider Islamic *da’wah*. Hang Radio uses capitalism as an element of supporting the prophetic mission on the one hand and rejects it as an element that contradicts the values of Islamic law on the other one.

### **The Salafism of Hang Radio**

Hang Radio does not accommodate other Islamic identities in its broadcast programs. There will be no music in the broadcast program, even *religious* or Islamic music, whether it is pop music or dangdut. This information is strongly suggested by Ghazali Yahya, the director of Hang Radio program, saying “the right entertainment for a Muslim is the Qur’an”.<sup>29</sup> That speech marks an identity that is unique in the Salafi Islamic tradition. The doctrine of Salafism can be traced back to an earlier period, to the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.<sup>30</sup> As a group that is closely associated

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<sup>27</sup>Interview with Zein Alatas, Riau, 14 September 2017.

<sup>28</sup>Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia: Television, Identity & the Middle Class*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 4.

<sup>29</sup>Interview with Ghazali Yahya, Riau, 14 September 2017.

<sup>30</sup>Din Wahid, “Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantren in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Wacana*, vol.15, no. 2 (2014), 367-376.

with a literal approach to studying the Qur'an and Hadith. Salafists intend to revive the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions under the onslaught of modernization and globalization. According to Roel Meijer as quoted by Bianca J. Smith and Saipul Hamdi,<sup>31</sup> the Salafists are, basically, "a fragmented movement that evades concrete definition." Thus, the term Salafi refers to movement that is fluid so that it does not have a fixed definition. The Salafi movement is not a stable homogeneous movement. In the global Islamic landscape, Salafi experiences an exchange of ideas with local culture which influences its heterogeneous character.

The following sub-subheadings illustrate how the Salafism of Hang Radio comes to the forefront along with its airwave broadcast, allowing three prominent issues, broadcast direction, the presentation of the role of women, and the insistence of Islamic symbols, to become the subjects of exemplary analysis. Each of the three issues is to be analytically discussed in a very brief way one after the other just to show how Salafism came to broadcasting.

### *Hang Radio's Da'wah broadcast direction*

Hang Radio does not broadcast music entertainment programs. This reflects the characteristics of Salafi religious beliefs. Hang Radio considers the definition of entertainment not merely in the form of music but broad meaning. The Qur'an is the best entertainment that can be presented. Entertainment in everyday life that develops today is a symbol of capitalism. Hang Radio implicitly rejects capitalism that has caused a spiritual drought. For Hang Radio, the spiritual drought is a result of the absence of "entertainment," namely *murattal*. Technically, *murattal* is played

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<sup>31</sup>Bianca J. Smith and Saipul Hamdi, "Between Sufi and Salafi Subjects: Female Leadership, Spiritual Power and Gender Matters in Lombok," in Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward (eds), *Gender and power in Indonesian Islam: Leaders, Feminists, Sufis and Pesantren Selves*, London and New York: Routledge, 2014, 25.

as an “interlude” program for listeners. However, in a broader context, the spiritual drought resulting from modernization and capitalism has basically been utilized by Hang Radio for the *survival* of its broadcast programs.

This favorite radio broadcast program is a matter of life. Listeners give questions related to the problems they face, then the speaker gives answers along with religious reasons. Basically, the listeners need answers based on religion, especially the Qur’an and Hadith. Some broadcast programs on Hang Radio, which are considered related to «sensitive» issues, are changed and modified in accordance with public interest. The Hang Radio broadcast program is always evaluated by Hang Radio management to anticipate broadcast programs that are ‘hard.’ Management felt responsible for preventing it because Singaporean media openly mentioned the influence of the Hang Radio broadcast program in forming the radical character of their listeners. According to the media reports, there were two Singaporeans who wanted to join ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; an organization allegedly accused of as being a world’ terrorist group) because they were affected by the Hang Radio broadcast program.<sup>32</sup> They are loyal listeners to Hang Radio who are likely to be influenced by the *takfir* doctrine. In the Salafi group, *takfir* doctrine is a monotheism-based religious creed that is widely known. This doctrine, according to Noorhaidi Hasan,<sup>33</sup> comes from the idea of Sayyid Qutb who wants to revive political Islam.

As a Salafi radio, Hang Radio at the beginning always gives other groups no room to carry out different religious practices. Not only is the Singapore government worried about the impact of Hang radio broadcast program, but also many local Muslims in Batam and they do not

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<sup>32</sup>[https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita\\_indonesia/2016/08/160823\\_indonesia\\_radio\\_batam\\_singapura](https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2016/08/160823_indonesia_radio_batam_singapura) accessed on October 1st, 2021 at 03.26 PM.

<sup>33</sup>Noorhaidi Hasan, “Ideologi, Identitas dan Ekonomi-Politik Kekerasan: Mencari Model Solusi Mengatasi Ancaman Radikalisme dan Terorisme di Indonesia”, *Prisma*, Volume 29, No. 4 (2010), 10.

agree with the Islamic identity that was developed by Hang Radio. Several other Muslim groups such as FPI (Islamic Defenders Front) felt 'heated' and several times held demonstrations at the Hang Radio office. Responding to the rejection and negative agitation of other Islamic groups, Hang Radio made changes to its broadcasts. In the perspective of structural functional theory, this phenomenon is common because a social system has the ability to defend itself and adapt itself to something new, or to analyze, borrowing the words of Giddens, "processes of evolution via mechanisms of adaptation".<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the mechanism possessed by a social system tends to show its ability to keep itself balanced.

### *Hang Radio's presentation of the role of women*

Hang Radio has quite clear rules in terms of gender segregation. Women are not allowed to become employees at Hang Radio.<sup>35</sup> If women were allowed to work at Hang Radio, the atmosphere of religiosity in Hang Radio would be reduced. Although the element of comfort was explicitly used as the main reason; basically the reason was modified for the sake of strengthening Islamic identity. In the Salafi tradition, segregation of men and women is a necessity. Women are not allowed to move in the public domain.<sup>36</sup> Besides rejection of the presence of women in work activities, in Hang Radio, there is also a strong paternalistic shade—the separation of studio entrances and exits between males and females as an example. This limit is a symbolic rule and at the level of reality there has been a deviation. This is in line with

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<sup>34</sup>Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, 1.

<sup>35</sup>For comparison, Radio Fajri FM also rejects women as its presenters. See Neisyah Ghassani Sabilah and Armawati Arbi, "Strategi Komunikasi Radio Fajri 993 FM Bogor dalam Mempertahankan Citra Radio Dakwah", *Al Munzir*, Volume 13, Number 2 (2020), 141.

<sup>36</sup>For comparison, see the way young Salafists actualize their identity in their daily life in Yuyun Sunesti, Noorhaidi Hasan, and Muhammad Najib Azca, "Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah: Agency and Identity Negotiation", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 8, Number 2 (2018), 173-197. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v8i2.173-198>.

the views of Delmus Puneri Salim who says that regulations in their basic form are non-immune social products with social construction.<sup>37</sup>

In this context, the regulation of the separation of entrances for men and women in Hang Radio has been reduced to the realm of reality. However, the integration in this type seems to be less in accordance with the traditions and habits of the general public, especially in Batam. In a cosmopolitan culture such as Batam, social interaction without segregation of the sexes in public space become commonplace. Thus, the Hang Radio regulation related to the separation between men and women does not seem to be fully implemented in social reality.

### *Hang Radio's insistence on Islamic symbols*

A symbol for an urban society has an important function for the struggle for identity. Symbols also have meaning to the affiliated group. Basically, symbols are very close to popular culture, serving as a selling point for luring consumers to consume certain products. Since the 1990s, according to Andrew N. Weintraub,<sup>38</sup> “the public presence of Islamic symbols, ideas, and texts in film, television, popular print media, music, and the Internet in Indonesia and Malaysia has been growing.”

The presence of Islamic symbols in public spaces in Indonesia signifies two things; public piety is increasingly widespread on the one hand and silencing the meaning of religion on the other. The first is suspected by the symptoms of revivalism in Indonesia, while the second is motivated and infiltrated by the spirit of capitalism. In the context of Hang Radio, the two indications above are experiencing a process of attraction and

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<sup>37</sup>Delmus Puneri Salim, *The Transnational and the Local in the Politics of Islam: The Case of West Sumatra Indonesia*, New York and London: Springer, 2015, 7-8.

<sup>38</sup>Andrew N. Weintraub, “Introduction: The Study of Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia”, in Andrew N. Weintraub (ed.), *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, London and New York: Routledge, 2011, 4.

mutual influence. The appearance of Hang Radio's audio is interpreted as a way to strengthen Hang Radio's identity as an independent radio missionary and Salafi character.

Environmental governance of Hang Radio studio is also loaded with the symbol of the purification of Islam typical of Salafism, but it is not immune to capitalism.<sup>39</sup> Near the parking area, there are stalls selling *halal* food and drinks. In addition to various Indonesian food and beverages, this shop sells typical Salafi products namely honey and herbal products. The nearby shops sell typical salafi attributes, such as books, headscarves, honey, clothes, and so forth. Male visitors who enjoy food are generally attached to salafi symbols. Female visitors wear headscarves and veils while men wear white pants to the heels of their feet and are generally bearded. Visitors at Hang Radio are generally filled with symbols of Islamic identity that represent the salafi movement.

Figure 1. HangFM Hang TVStation



(Source : The Straitstimes)

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<sup>39</sup>For comparison, see Zainal Abidin Achmad, "Integrasi Pesan Dakwah dan Budaya: Studi Etnografi Virtual Mediamorfosis Radio Nada FM Sumenep Madura", *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam*, Volume 9, Number 2 (2019), 238-263.

Food and beverage shops before entering the Hang Radio studio represent the character of capitalism. Delicious dishes and fresh drinks are offered. Visitors of Hang Radio studios are given a business show that does not conflict with Islamic law. Every day, dozens of Hang Radio visitors come from Batam, Singapore and Malaysia to see the atmosphere of the radio studio and to improve the social solidarity relations of fellow Hang radio listeners. Even some visitors from Singapore occasionally provide food assistance in the form of rice, instant noodles, or cakes. The donations are distributed to those who are entitled to the 'hand carts' program. The program was also broadcast by Hang Radio as an effort to attract listeners to make donations on the one hand and efforts to improve the broadcast programs by making them more interesting to be heard on the other side.

Capitalism is an ideology that manifests and seeps to various sectors of life along with the openness of a social system. It can manifest in various faces and can join hands with elements of religion, so that it can easily give rise to the so-called "economics of religion."<sup>40</sup> In the context of Hang radio, both social interaction with the surrounding environment and the influence of social structures encourage the spirit of capitalism to infiltrate Hang Radio policies, regulations and strategies. The openness of its relationships with generous listeners has encouraged Hang Radio to flex its policies in terms of religion to be in line with the ideology of capitalism. Generous listeners can contribute in the form of material to support the symbolization of their salafi identity. The support can be in cash or through the purchase of salafi attributes sold near the Hang Radio studio. The value of economic benefits from the practice of buying and selling commodities is clearly useful for the benefit of Hang radio. This is because Hang Radio requires funds that are not small for the broadcast

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<sup>40</sup>Larry Witham, *Marketplace of the Gods: How Economics Explains Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.



program operations. Every year, Hang radio must pay rent for the studio. This significant cost certainly requires strategies based on economic value for the continuation of the *da'wah* radio. Although what Hang Radio is doing is the self-sustained economy; it is actually a part of capitalism. This is due to the fact that Hang Radio does not only get money to support its survival, it also receives economic profit to pay salary for its staffs.

Strengthening salafi Islamic symbols can also be found in the Hang Radio studio *mushalla*. Inside the *mushalla* there are bookshelves filled with books. The books were obtained from visitor donations and purchased by Hang radio employees. The ideas of the books represent the ideas of the Salafi movement. The books do not allow the appearance or symbol of human images. An *Iqra'* book (a guide to reading Arabic letters to master the Qur'an) whose back cover displays the picture of the author, Kiyai As'ad Humam, is covered with white paper. For the Salafi movement, images of human beings may not be displayed to avoid heresy.

Inside the *Mushalla* there is a billboard that displays a number of donations from visitors or *mushalla* worshipers. What is interesting is not only in the form of *rupiah* (Indonesian currency) but also Singapore dollars. This indicates that the influence of Hang radio has spread across national borders. Visitors or worshipers from Singapore are interested in the Hang Radio broadcast program and in turn change from listeners to loyal followers of the Salafi identity. Loyal followers of Hang Radio are characterized by behavior that changes totally in worship matters (religious practice) to attributes or symbols.

### **The trajectory of Salafism on the air**

Hang Radio listeners usually come from a profession that is *mobile*. In Batam, the majority of listeners began an emotional connection with the radio station through radio installed in their personal cars. They listen to

Hang Radio broadcasts while driving.<sup>41</sup> In the midst of the business and traffic jams, they need something that can be heard to avoid psychological confusion on the one hand, and to learn religious teachings through the airwaves on the other hand. Motivation of ‘fadness’ combined with a passion for learning religion has complemented the process of forming the identity of a listener and turned him into a loyal follower of the Salafi movement.

During this time, these listeners did not really understand the teachings of Islam because most of them had a “secular” educational background. These listeners positioned Hang Radio as a new ‘center of religious learning’ which negated the center of traditional and non-religious learning environments. In current development of life, the value socialization value has shifted from conventional institutions (families and educational institutions) towards new media (television, radio, and the internet),<sup>42</sup> or digital-based.<sup>43</sup> The role of these conventional institutions has been reduced along with the dominance of radio, the internet and television media in the process of value dissemination.

In that context, Hang Radio has functioned as a media that adds to the diversity of religious authorities in Batam. This is influenced by the effectiveness and efficiency of the religious learning process which does not require much energy, time and money. Hang Radio is also a ‘challenger’ that is quite calculated towards the authority of established traditional scholars. Crucial religious issues need not be questioned by ulama (Muslim scholars) because Hang Radio has often provided ‘enlightenment’ of

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<sup>41</sup>Imron Rosidi and Rizal Zain, “Strategi Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Pekanbaru dalam Menyampaikan Program Siaran Dakwah”, *Idarotuna*, Volume 1, Number 2 (2019), 1-15.

<sup>42</sup>See Sarah Genner and Daniel Süß, “Socialization as Media Effect”, in Patrick Rolßler, Cynthia A Hoffner, and Liesbet van Zoonen (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*, Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017, 1-15.

<sup>43</sup>Masduki and Shabri Shaleh Anwar, *Filosofi Dakwah Kontemporer*, Tembilahan, Riau: PT. Indragiri Dot Com, 2018, 77-88

the religion needed. The authority of traditional scholars is possible to experience reduction along with the development of *da'wah* media.

Central to Hang Radio's struggles to come to the forefront of Islam in Batam are its strategies to present itself as a *da'wah* radio, allowing itself to be identical to no other than the promulgation of Islamic religious learning.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, the radio rejects to be accused of being a radio that brings radicalism in the Muslim community. To dismiss this kind of accusation, the radio is committed to the Islamic tradition of carrying out the so-called "peace."<sup>45</sup> The owner of Hang Radio, Zein Alatas, said "we work in the public domain; many people are watching over our work. How can we spread ideas or convey ideas that are clearly prohibited by the State. If we want to spread radical ideas or ideologies, of course we will work quietly in a hidden place."<sup>46</sup>

Hang Radio uses the term public space to answer allegations of radicalism addressed to it. The public sphere has 'transparency' that can be accessed by all parties. Public space is like a transparent "aquarium" that can be seen by everyone. In public spaces there are still private domains or domains that are "hidden." In this case it is clear that there is still something guarded not to be displayed in the public space. However, Hang Radio is still in the stage of fighting for its salafi identity in the public sphere. Basically, the role of other Muslim communities is very dominant in suppressing the movement of deviations that might occur in Hang Radio. The Muslim community in Batam still strongly recognizes that Indonesian Islam is tolerant and open to a diversity of thoughts. The accommodative nature is sometimes mistaken

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<sup>44</sup>For comparison, see Syarif Fauzi and Afif Abd. Latif, "Model Radio Dakwah dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Keagamaan Masyarakat", *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam*, Volume 1, number 2 (2016), 89-110.

<sup>45</sup>Zaki Islam, Aef Kusnawan, and Dadan Anugrah, " Fenomena Dakwah Salaf di Radio Tarbiyah Sunnah 1476 AM", *Prophetica: Scientific and Research Journal of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting*, Volume 5, Number 1 (2019), 28.

<sup>46</sup>Interview with Zein Alatas, Riau, 14 September 2017.

by some scholars as a form of syncretism between religion and culture, even though this kind of assumption has been denied by a number of circles, for example by Azra,<sup>47</sup> saying that syncretic-Abangan Islam in Geertz's terms<sup>48</sup> was no longer relevant in the present context. The renewal and revival of Islam in Indonesia over the last two decades have actually eliminated that assumption.

Hang Radio is trying to fight for an Islamic identity in the public space. Identity in this context refers to the view of Sunarwoto<sup>49</sup> that "it is what makes people different from one another and significant membership of a certain society." In that context, identity is something inherent in a person and group. In Islam, along with the diversity of interpretations of Islamic texts, the presence of a variety of different identities in the Muslim community is a necessity.

The Salafi ideas echoed by Hang Radio will not give birth to homogenization in the Muslim community. This is because the influence of Hang Radio will vary at the level of individual Muslims depending on their socio-cultural background and education. Hang Radio listeners have different perceptions of the Hang radio broadcast program. Especially in Batam, besides Hang radio, there are many other *da'wah* radio stations struggling with each other over the "how Muslims should be" discourse in the onslaught of modernization and globalization. Each *da'wah* radio has its own distinctive identity.

The identity is highlighted in the broadcast program. The protrusion has two purposes. The *first* is that the distinctive identity is set up to be a selling power to the public. This means that the identity highlighted by Hang Radio has its own advantages as a tool or a means of differentiation from other *da'wah* radios in Batam. Every product sold in the public domain

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<sup>47</sup>Azyumardi Azra, "Islam Indonesia" ..., 83.

<sup>48</sup>Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.

<sup>49</sup>Sunarwoto, "Dakwah Radio in Surakarta" ..., 196.

should have its own uniqueness or distinctiveness. This is related to the increasingly tight business competition today. The uniqueness is important to be a selling power that attracts listeners to continue to consume the Hang Radio broadcast program. The *second purpose* is that the distinctive identity is highlighted to influence listeners so that they have the same identity they share with each other. The motive is that Hang Radio is making efforts to influence listeners to follow the religious understanding or religious identity they have developed.

## **Conclusion**

The struggle of Hang Radio in Batam is a form of exertion to enforce Islamic identity through the media. At first, the Hang Radio station had a rigid mission of Islamic purification. Along with the increasing contestation with other Muslim communities, Hang Radio softened its self-perceived prophetic mission. Hang Radio produces ideas, regulations, symbols, broadcast programs, and studio forms based on their Salafi Islamic identity. Radio managers (owners and employees) continue to practice negotiations, but substantially do not eliminate the identity of 'Salafi Islam,' which is attached to Hang Radio. Hang Radio, which has Salafi religious ideas and an audience segment of this group, has a way to fight for Islamic identity. This is framed in the vision, mission, affiliation, programs, and policies and so on. Hang Radio tries to deliver how Muslims should be in the midst of modernization, secularization and globalization.

As an implication, the way Hang Radio came into the broadcasting field along with its struggles for the Salafist *da'wah* of Islamic ideology it adheres to suggests the dynamics of Islam on the airwaves in Indonesia, including in a growing industrial city of Batam. This further implies that the struggle for a certain Islamic identity is more fragmented than intact and cohesive. This struggle for the Islamic identity in question is not immune from the spirit of

capitalism. However, it seems to be remarkably influenced by transnational and local elements, both ideologically and economically. Apart from that, the presence of Hang Radio in Batam indicates that the struggle for the Salafist Islamic identity through the *da'wah* media appears to be exclusively strong, and it is justifiable to say that Salafism in Batam has presented its remarkably robust appearance through the airwaves.

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