

Islamic Animation in Indonesia: Navigating the tension between Da'wa and Religious Commodification

A Thesis

**Submitted to Master's Study Program of Islamic Studies at the
Faculty of Islamic Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



by:
**Muhammad Wahyudi
01212110016**

**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA
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ABSTRACT

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Programme : MA in Islamic Studies
Title : Islamic Animation In Indonesia: Navigating the tension between Da'wa And Religious Commodification

This thesis delves into the intricate interplay between da'wa and religious commodification within the realm of Indonesia's Islamic Animation. Coinciding with the rise of new media technologies, Muslims have diversified their da'wa approaches by leveraging various media channels, notably Islamic Animation — a prominent instance of popular culture undergoing Islamization. By focusing on Indonesian Islamic Animation, this thesis examines the key actors behind its development, the propagation of Islam via animation, and the negotiation between da'wa and religious commodification. This thesis draws upon Dominik Muller's theory of Pop-Islamism, positing that Islamist ideologies persist in their articulation, albeit manifested through altered mediums and lexicons via the appropriation and adaptation of popular culture. Concurrently, it engages with Greg Fealy's theory on Religious Commodification, which suggests that religious symbols are transmuted into commodified entities, available for purchase and exchange. Adopting a qualitative research methodology, this investigation addresses several pertinent research questions. Data collection is facilitated through online interviews and observational techniques. Notably, interviews were conducted with a producer and members of the marketing division from both the "RIko The Series" and "Ibra Berkisah" production teams. This analysis reveals that Indonesian Islamic Animation is driven by a cohort of Muslim professionals affiliated with the Hijrah movement, unified in their aspiration to offer Islamic content as a distinctive viewing choice for Muslim kids. Indonesian Islamic Animation spreads Islamic values through animated character stories, visual elements such as calligraphy, and occasional musical drama. In navigating the delicate balance between da'wa and religious commodification, the animation production team actively sought input from religious scholars (*ulama*) and forged alliances with ideologically-aligned religious organizations to uphold the integrity of Islamic messages. This thesis argues that Indonesian Islamic Animation, functioning as a medium for da'wa and targeting Indonesian Muslim families in search of instructive content for their kids, to ensure wider acceptance and facilitate collaborations, it becomes important to present more "inclusive" content that avoids controversial symbols of Islamic ideology. This approach enables the animation to be embraced by the public and facilitates partnerships with external entities, including government agencies.

Keywords: *Islamic Animation, Da'wa, Religious Commodification, Hijrah Movement.*

ملخص البحث

الاسم	محمد وحيودي
الكلية	دراسة إسلامية
الموضوع	الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية في إندونيسيا: التنقل بين توتر الدعوة وتجارة الدين

هذه الرسالة استكشفت التفاعل المعقد بين الدعوة وتجارة الدين ضمن نطاق الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية في إندونيسيا. مع ظهور تكنولوجيا الوسائط الجديدة، قام المسلمون بتنويع نهجهم في الدعوة من خلال استغلال قنوات الوسائط المتعددة، ولا سيما الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية، وهي نموذج بارز للثقافة الشعبية التي تخضع للإسلمة. من خلال التركيز على الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية الإندونيسية، درست هذه الرسالة الجهات الفاعلة الرئيسية وراء تطورها، ونشر الإسلام عبر الرسوم المتحركة، والتفاوض بين الدعوة وتجارة الدين. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على نظرية دومينيك مولر (Dominik Muller) للإسلامية الشعبية، والتي تُفترض أن الأيديولوجيات الإسلامية تستمر في توجيهها، ولكن من خلال وسائط ولغات معدلة عبر استيفاء وتكييف الثقافة الشعبية. في الوقت نفسه، تشارك مع نظرية غريغ فيلي (Greg Fealy) حول تجارة الدين، التي تشير إلى أن الرموز الدينية تم تحويلها إلى سلع تم شراؤها وبيعها. اعتمادًا على منهجية البحث النوعية، تتناول هذه الدراسة عدة أسئلة بحثية هامة. وتم جمع البيانات من خلال المقابلات الإلكترونية وتقنيات الملاحظة. تمت مقابلات مع منتج وأعضاء من فريق التسويق من فرق إنتاج "Riko The Series" و "Ibra Berkisah" كشفت هذه التحليلات أن الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية الإندونيسية يقودها مجموعة من المحترفين المسلمين المرتبطين بحركة الهجرة، متحدين في رغبتهم في تقديم المحتوى الإسلامي كخيار مشاهدة مميز للأطفال المسلمين. نقلت الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية الإندونيسية القيم الإسلامية من خلال قصص الشخصيات المتحركة، والعناصر المرئية مثل الخط العربي، والدراما الموسيقية العرضية. في التوازن الحساس بين الدعوة وتجارة الدين، بحث فريق إنتاج الرسوم المتحركة نشطاً عن مدخلات من العلماء الدينيين وشكل تحالفات مع المنظمات الدينية التي تتوافق معها أيديولوجيًا للحفاظ على نزاهة الرسائل الإسلامية. جادلت هذه الرسالة بأن الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية الإندونيسية، كوسيلة للدعوة والتوجه نحو الأسر المسلمة الإندونيسية بحثاً عن محتوى تعليمي لأطفالهم، لضمان قبول أوسع وتسهيل التعاون، من المهم تقديم محتوى "شامل" يتجنب الرموز المثيرة للجدل من الأيديولوجيا الإسلامية. أمكنت هذا النهج الرسوم المتحركة من الحصول على قبول من الجمهور ويسهل الشراكات مع الكيانات الخارجية، بما في ذلك الوكالات الحكومية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرسوم المتحركة الإسلامية، الدعوة، تجارة الدين، حركة الهجرة.

TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
ا	a	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	ṣ	ن	n
ث	th	ض	ḍ	و	w
ج	j	ط	ṭ	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ي	y
خ	kh	ع	'		
د	d	غ	gh		
ذ	dh	ف	f		
ر	r	ق	q		
ز	z	ك	k		

Short Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
َ	a	جَلَسَ	<i>jalasa</i>
ِ	i	رَكِبَ	<i>rakiba</i>
ُ	u	كُتِبَ	<i>kutiba</i>

Long Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
ا/ى	ā	جَرى/سَافِر	<i>jarā/sāfar</i>
ي	ī	سَلِيم	<i>salīm</i>
و	ū	سَجُود	<i>sujūd</i>

Diphthong

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
و	aw	مَولَا	<i>mawlā</i>
ي	ay	غَيب	<i>ghayb</i>

Notes:

1. Consonant with shaddah (◌ّ) for instance, أُمَّة is written as *ummah* (double letters).
2. Arabic letter *hamzah* (ء) at the beginning of a word is transliterated into “a” not into “‘a”. For instance, أحمد is written as *aḥmad* not *`aḥmad*.
3. Arabic script of *alif-lam qamariyah* (ال) is written as “al” at the beginning of words and *alif-lam shamsiyah* (ا) is written in accordance with the first letter at the beginning of words. For instance:
المائدة : al-māidah
الرحمان : ar-rahmān
4. Arabic letter *ta' marbutah* (ة) is written as “h” when it is located at the end of the words, such as البقرة is written as *al-baqarah*. When located in the middle of a sentence is written as “t”, such as أُمَّة وَسَطًا is written as *ummatan wasatan*.

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Muhammad Wahyudi

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This study explores the intricate interplay between da'wa and religious commodification by examining the case of Islamic animation in Indonesia. In the age of evolving media, Muslims have increasingly diversified their da'wa outreach through various platforms, prominently including Islamic animation. The Indonesian animation industry has seen a marked surge in recent years, solidifying its status within the entertainment sector. Within this blossoming arena, a significant segment of Muslim professionals play pivotal roles in shaping its trajectory. Recognizing the Muslim community's concerns over appropriate content for their children, various Islamic animations have emerged in Indonesia, reflecting a desire for content congruent with Islamic values. Indonesia's position as a Muslim-majority country predominantly underpins the impetus for the development of Islamic animations. The dearth of Islamic content tailored for Muslim kids has galvanized animators, investors, and other industry stakeholders to fill this void, explicitly targeting Muslim families.

In Indonesia's economic, social, and political dynamics, the middle class is a social class that has shown significant growth. The growth of the new middle class in Indonesia since the last decade has increasingly shown the importance of their role to the public. The discourse on social classes often highlights the middle class as catalysts for economic change, buttressed by their purchasing power.¹

In 2012, the BCG report indicated that Indonesia's Middle-Class and Affluent Consumers (MAC) numbered 74 million, while a more conservative estimate from McKinsey placed the figure at 45 million. Projected trajectories suggest this middle class could burgeon to 141 million by 2020. Predominantly residing in urban

¹ Subkhi Ridho, "Kelas Menengah Muslim Baru dan Kontestasi Wacana Pluralisme di Media Sosial," *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiologi* 4, no. 2 (November 6, 2017): 88, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jps.v4i2.28582>.

centres—hubs of economic and business activity—this group enjoys enhanced access to employment, education, and other resources. The consequence of living in the city is that the middle class must be kept in the city culture, both in terms of aspects of thought and behaviour. Given that a significant fraction of this middle class identifies as Muslim, they inherently become instrumental in the growth trajectory of Indonesia's middle class.²

The ascendancy of the Muslim middle class is not exclusive to Indonesia; it mirrors trends in countries like Malaysia, Qatar, Turkey, and Iran. Vali Nasr has termed this global trend the "forces of fortune," juxtaposing it against the post-9/11 stereotype of the Middle East as a radicalism hotspot. This flourishing middle class is seen as a bastion for economic prosperity and the advancement of democratic ideals and human rights. With their robust purchasing power and information literacy, the Muslim middle class is poised to respond adroitly to socio-economic and political shifts.³

Research by Alvara Research Center revealed that 68.4% of the Indonesian Muslim middle class gleaned religious information from TV, followed by local *pengajian* events (54%), broadcast messenger accounts (17%), social media articles (14.1%), and online articles (13.9%).⁴ While TV and *pengajian* remain principal sources, the gradual rise of internet-based sources cannot be sidelined, especially given Indonesia's escalating internet consumption. The Association of Indonesian Internet Service Users (APJII) reported that in 2022-2023, internet users would account for approximately 78.119% of the nation's populace.⁵

The Indonesian Muslim middle class, which has high purchasing power and tends to be consumptive, seems to have become the right market for Islamic or Sharia-based products and services. This trend is evident in the proliferation of

² Hasanuddin Ali and Lilik Purwandi, "Indonesia 2020: The Urban Middle Class Millennials" (Alvara Research Center, February 2016); Hasanuddin Ali And Lilik Purwandi, "Indonesia Middle Class Muslim: Religiosity And Consumerism" (Alvara Research Center, February 2017).

³ Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia: Television, Identity, and the Middle Class* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁴ Ali And Purwandi, "Indonesia Middle Class Muslim: Religiosity And Consumerism."

⁵ Data Indonesia, "APJII: Pengguna Internet Indonesia 215,63 Juta pada 2022-2023," [Dataindonesia.id](https://dataindonesia.id/digital/detail/apjii-pengguna-internet-indonesia-21563-juta-pada-20222023), accessed July 7, 2023, <https://dataindonesia.id/digital/detail/apjii-pengguna-internet-indonesia-21563-juta-pada-20222023>.

Muslim fashion stores, Sharia banks (now merged into Bank Syariah Indonesia), Sharia hotels, Islamic schools, sharia-based beauty clinics, Islamic soap operas, and films.⁶

In addition to being attached to a consumptive lifestyle, the Indonesian Muslim middle class is notably active in utilizing the internet and social media platforms. They engage in online spaces for interpersonal communication and as a medium to disseminate and exchange information, especially concerning Islamic teachings. This digital engagement underpins the burgeoning popularity of young preachers well-versed in the nuances of the digital realm. Intriguingly, several of these celebrated preachers on social media platforms do not have a formal religious background. Proficient communication and adept management of social media platforms suffice to endear them to audiences, leading to a burgeoning base of devoted followers.⁷

Young preachers who are also new religious authority figures have used a variety of different social media platforms, from YouTube to Tiktok, which used to have a negative impression on some Indonesians. Da'wah, on social media, which was initially centered on the figure of the preacher, now has a new pattern that no longer needs to show the figure of the preacher. In recent years, Islamic preaching has not only targeted young Indonesian Muslims. However, it has also targeted Muslim families who need educational shows for their children without worrying about who is behind the production of Islamic animations their children watch. Several studios have started to produce Indonesian Islamic animations, from the

⁶ Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Expressing Islam* (ISEAS Publishing, 2008), 15–39; Yanwar Pribadi and Muhammad Adlin Sila, "Intertwining Beauty and Piety: Cosmetics, Beauty Treatments, and Halāl Lifestyle in Urban Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 27, no. 1 (June 12, 2023): 33–64, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i1.588>.

⁷ Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Rise of Cool Ustadz: Preaching, Subcultures, and the Pemuda Hijrah Movement," in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia* (ISEAS Publishing, n.d.), 239–57; Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (May 29, 2020): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>; Eva F. Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, no. 1–2 (February 14, 2018): 68–99, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-12340085>.

simple 2D animation of Yufid Kids to the animation of Nussa, which has shown its feature-length film in several Indonesian cinemas.⁸

Islamic da'wah aimed at Muslim families through Indonesian Islamic animations is undoubtedly different from da'wah in general regarding delivery and production. Muslim families in Indonesia are a sizeable market segment for entrepreneurs to develop Islamic businesses including Islamic animation. Furthermore, the high cost of animation production has required studio houses to find ways to survive and continue spreading their Islamic mission. They face the problem of presenting a show that still conveys Islamic messages on the one hand and is commercially viable on the other.

Focusing on two prominent Islamic animations, "Riko The Series" and "Ibra Berkisah," this study delves deeper. The former, an edutainment series by Garis Sepuluh Corporation, infuses Quranic teachings into its episodes. Meanwhile, "Ibra Berkisah," a product of Manara Studios, brings to life the *Sirah Nabawiyah* through family-friendly musical dramas. Both have strategically employed "Islam" as a unique selling proposition to captivate their market. For instance, since its inception on YouTube in February 2020, "Riko The Series" boasts 2.17 million subscribers and has aired three animation sessions. In contrast, "Ibra Berkisah," despite being only a year old, has garnered over 9 million cumulative views.⁹

1.2 Research Objective

There are three research objectives that this study aims to achieve. These are:

1. To describe the key actors behind Indonesian Islamic animation.
2. To describe Islamic propagation methods used by the production house of Indonesian Islamic animation.

⁸ Febriyantino Nur Pratama, "Nussa: Film Animasi Indonesia yang Tak Kalah dari Hollywood," detikhot, accessed July 8, 2023, <https://hot.detik.com/movie/d-5767416/nussa-film-animasi-indonesia-yang-tak-kalah-dari-hollywood>.

⁹ "Riko The Series," Riko The Series, accessed June 7, 2023, <https://rikotheries.com/>.

3. To uncover the negotiation process undertaken by the Indonesian Islamic Animation production team in negotiating da'wa and commodification in the animation.

1.3 Research Question

Due to discernible gaps in existing research, I have elected to concentrate on Islamic animation in Indonesia. To focus my exploration, I selected "Riko The Series," and "Ibra Berkisah", two Indonesian Islamic animations that has witnessed considerable growth and is currently being broadcasted. The following pivotal questions will steer my research:

1. Who are the actors behind Indonesian Islamic Animation?
2. How does Indonesian Islamic Animation propagate Islam through Islamic Animation?
3. How does the production team of Indonesian Islamic Animations navigate the tension between da'wa and religious commodification?

1.4 Literature Review

I will divide this session into two discussions, namely, the commodification of religion and Islamic animation. Numerous studies have been conducted on the commodification of religion. One of these studies is "Brand Islam: The Marketing and Commodification of Piety" by Shirazi Faegheh. In this work, Faegheh explores the intersection of Islamic practices and consumer preferences, examining the growth of a global industry that caters to the market demand for halal-certified products. The author argues that the expansion of the Islamic market is closely linked to the increase in the Muslim population residing in or visiting Western Europe and North America, as well as international exports. "Brand Islam" serves as both a contemporary response and a statement of identity and solidarity, which may or may not guarantee consumers a closer relationship with Allah. While the

book primarily focuses on growing and profitable market sectors such as food, cosmetics, toys, and fashion, it neglects the entertainment industry.¹⁰

In *Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization and the Afterlife of Development*, Daromir Rudnyckyj focuses on the case study of the state-owned steel mill, Krakatau Steel, and its experiment to institutionalize religion to inculcate ethics and practices conducive to development in the face of the dual threats of globalization and neoliberalism. In this context, religion assumes the form of the Emotional and Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) training program, which stands out as one of the prominent manifestations of Indonesia's new-age spiritual reform program. This program witnesses the fusion of modernist Islamic piety, human resource management, and self-help strategies. Instead of arguing that Islam contradicts modernity and development, Rudnyckyj's case study illustrates how the Islamic piety movement is being utilized as a rational solution to the crisis of industrial development. Drawing influence from James Ferguson's (1999) concept of 'faith in development,' Rudnyckyj asserts that Indonesia has transitioned from a phase characterized by 'faith in development' to an ethos of 'developing faith.' In other words, the unrealized aspirations of the state-led industrial development paradigm have been supplanted by a belief in neoliberal-inspired experiments that aim to enhance individual piety to combat unethical behaviors that hinder Indonesia's development.¹¹

Shifting our attention to the commodification of religion in the Indonesian context, Greg Fealy examines this phenomenon and its impact on religious culture and thought in his book chapter. Fealy explores various forms of the broadly defined 'Islamic economy' in Indonesia, including banking, insurance, stock trading, pawnbroking, medical care, mobile phone services, tourism, pilgrimages, and personal development courses. He analyzes the socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that drive the commodification of Islam. He argues that

¹⁰ Faegheh Shirazi, *Brand Islam: The Marketing and Commodification of Piety*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

¹¹ Daromir Rudnyckyj, *Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization, and The Afterlife of Development*, Expertise: Cultures and Technologies of Knowledge (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

globalization and modernization have led to unstable religious identities, prompting urban middle-class Muslims to search for moral certainty. The new consumption of Islam primarily revolves around individuals as active consumers rather than relying on traditional institutional channels for religious learning, guidance, and identity formation. Fealy also suggests that commodification leads to a more diverse and segmented spectrum of Islamic expressions but is also susceptible to rapid change.¹²

In Indonesia, various aspects of Islam can be commodified, ranging from routine religious rituals like Friday sermons to seemingly insignificant items like stickers. Muzakki, in his analysis of Friday sermons in Surabaya, emphasizes their cultural and economic exchange as popular religious practices. He argues that preachers propagate Islam and make it accessible to lay Muslims in a simplified and standardized form. Muslim preachers and communities utilize the Friday sermon to construct their religious identity and socio-economic class identity. According to Muzakki, Islamic public sermons can be considered symbolic commodities, providing an avenue for Islamic religious teachers to monetize their knowledge and public speaking skills through modern media platforms like television.¹³

Lukens-Bulls examines the consumption and circulation of stickers among Indonesian youth, referring to it as 'commodity ideologization.' Stickers serve as a medium to display and broadcast a specific version of Islamic practice, allowing viewers and owners to embody Muslim identity easily and conveniently. These religious stickers are explicitly targeted at Indonesian Muslims, reaffirming their faith and reshaping their social and civic identities in the post-New Order era. The chapter explores two noteworthy processes: the 'ideologization' of commodities and the commoditization of religion. The former process involves imbuing meaning into a product, transforming it into more than just a means of sustenance or refreshment, and showcasing the Islamic identity of a Muslim. The latter process involves embedding meaning into material goods, with producers and sellers

¹² Fealy, "2. Consuming Islam."

¹³ Akh Muzakki, "Islam As A Symbolic Commodity: Transmitting and Consuming Islam through Public Sermons in Indonesia," in *Religious Commodifications in Asia* (Routledge, 2007).

catering to consumers' need to display their religious identity. In essence, the commodification of religion involves producing commodities infused with religious meaning and integrating religious meaning into commodities.¹⁴

Noorhaidi Hasan highlights the close relationship between the development of public Islam and the wave of Islamic revival in the mid-1970s, along with advancements in education and mass communication. These factors have contributed to the increased visibility of Muslim communities in the public sphere, giving rise to various religious symbols, Islamic institutions, and new Muslim lifestyles. Hasan argues that popular piety is supported by the efforts of da'wa agents who package Islamic messages for mass consumption, presenting a modern, tolerant, inclusive, and progressive version of Islam in the Indonesian public sphere. The Islamic market has also expanded, leading to the proliferation of Islamic business institutions, some of which have Islamized American-style marketing methods, exemplified by figures like Aa' Gym. Hasan contends that the commodification of Islam, driven by growing market demand for Islamic products, does not necessarily imply commercialization but rather an attempt to present Islam in a way that appeals to a wider audience and contributes to the da'wa mission. Islamic preaching is no longer confined to mosques; it has expanded into spaces like star hotels, novels, magazines, soap operas, and religious songs.¹⁵

In contrast to Noorhaidi Hasan's perspective, Rakhmani argues that certain Islamic soap operas in Indonesia represent a form of commercialization of da'wa. Rakhmani's findings indicate that soap operas such as *Hidayah*, *Munajah Cinta*, and *Para Pencari Tuhan* aim to replicate the commercial success of other films or television series. To mitigate commercial risks, these soap operas feature religious scholars (Ustaz) to ensure that the representations align with dominant Islamic practices in Indonesia. Various ideological motivations shape the narratives of these

¹⁴ Ronald Lukens-Bull, "Commodification of Religion and the 'religification' of Commodities: Youth Culture and Religious Identity," in *Religious Commodifications in Asia*, 2008, 220.

¹⁵ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (October 1, 2009): 229–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-009-0096-9>.

soap operas, offering versions of Islam that address social concerns faced by middle-class Muslim viewers. Television in Indonesia serves as a platform for preaching, with soap operas acting as sermons and the audience as the congregation. Commercialization, therefore, appears to be the prevailing model through which da'wa operates.¹⁶

Islamic animation has been the subject of extensive research. In a global context, Omar Sayfo examines the growth and characteristics of Islamic animated cartoons in Egypt, exploring the process of Islamization in animation. Egypt, the first Arab country to produce animation in the 1930s, initially aimed its animations at the local society, reflecting local values. However, in the 1990s, with the close relationship between the Egyptian government and Al-Azhar (the highest religious authority in the country), the produced animations began targeting transnational Muslims.¹⁷ Platforms like YouTube and other social media outlets facilitate the broader reach of Arabic animation. Arab animation artists have utilized these new media platforms to distribute their work, allowing them unprecedented freedom, particularly during and after the Arab Spring in the Middle East.¹⁸

In Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia, Upin & Ipin is an immensely popular animation. Although produced in Malaysia, this animation has gained substantial popularity among Indonesian children. Dahlan bin Abdul Ghani's research on Upin & Ipin examines the use of Malaysian cultural iconic visual styles, backgrounds, lifestyles, character archetypes, and narratives. Ghani argues that Upin & Ipin successfully promotes Malaysian folklore culture and effectively portray Malaysian values, including Islamic ones, by fostering

¹⁶ Inaya Rakhmani, "The Commercialization of Da'wah: Understanding Indonesian Sinetron and Their Portrayal of Islam," *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 4–5 (June 1, 2014): 340–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514523528>.

¹⁷ Omar Sayfo, "Mediating a Disney-Style Islam: The Emergence of Egyptian Islamic Animated Cartoons," *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13, no. 2 (July 1, 2018): 102–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746847718782892>.

¹⁸ Tariq Alrimawi, "Issues of Representation in Arab Animation Cinema: Practice, History and Theory" (PhD Thesis, Loughborough University, 2014).

harmonious relationships among diverse communities, groups, and religious backgrounds.¹⁹

Within the Indonesian context, several animation studios have produced animations aired on YouTube and television. Examples include Nussa, Riko The Series, and others. Bagus Mustakim's research focuses on the Nussa animation, analyzing the Islamist values depicted in the aired videos, the exhibited religious style, and the development of parenting identity. Mustakim finds that the Nussa animation promotes Salafi values, and the displayed religious style aligns with Salafism. Mustakim refers to the parenting style depicted in Nussa animation as a popular Islamist authoritative parenting model, which competes with other parenting models and serves as an identity sought after for religious authority in early childhood care.²⁰

Nussa animation was also studied by Rahmatullah Salam, who directed his focus on the reception of the Qur'an in the animated episode of Nussa Girls Talk. In this particular episode, the Qur'anic verse from Surat Al-Ahzab: 33 is presented, addressing the regulation of adornment for women, which tends to be interpreted in a textual manner. Salam argues that the reception of this episode of Nussa Girls Talk serves as both exegesis and informative content. The interpretation presented in the episode leans towards a textual approach. There are at least two reasons for choosing the textual form of interpretation. Firstly, the animation primarily targets children, necessitating simplicity and brevity. Secondly, the background of the animation maker is affiliated with the Hijrah movement, an Islamic movement known to lean towards fundamentalism.²¹

Halimy Firdausy examined the animation Riko The Series, focusing on the virtualization aspect of understanding hadith. Employing Roland Barthes' Lexia,

¹⁹ Dahlan Bin Abdul Ghani, "Upin & Ipin: Promoting Malaysian Culture Values through Animation," *Historia y Comunicación Social* 20, no. 1 (July 6, 2015): 241–58, https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_HICS.2015.v20.n1.49558.

²⁰ Bagus Mustakim, Noorhaidi Hasan, and Zulkipli Lessy, "Popular Islamist Authoritative Parenting: A Contest of Identity in Islamic Education for Early Childhood," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 19, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 179–92, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2022.192-01>.

²¹ Rahmatullah Salam, "Textual Interpretation Of The Prohibition Of Makeup: Reception And Discourse Analysis Of Nussa Girls Talk," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* 17, no. 2 (2020): 307–28.

Firdausy dissects each scene of *Riko The Series* and reveals the underlying elements. He argues that an ideological element is emerging, implicitly emphasizing an orthodox religious model that strictly adheres to doctrinal standards directly referenced in the Quran. This emphasis is reinforced by various characters' abundant use of "Islamic" terms in the animation. Furthermore, Firdausy notes that *Riko The Series* has succeeded technically in visualizing the understanding of hadith. He also emphasizes the importance of aligning the visualization of hadith with the semiotic and hermeneutic structure of the hadith to avoid potential distortion of its meaning.²²

Previous studies on animation have overlooked the issue of commodification inherent in Islamic animation. Despite animation artists claiming that the primary purpose of creating Islamic animation is to preach and educate children, it cannot be denied that the animation industry in Indonesia has become a commodity that has seen increased profit potential. Previous studies have not adequately addressed the negotiation between da'wa (religious propagation) and commodification. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by focusing on two Indonesian Islamic animations currently airing on YouTube and television platforms. The first animation is *Riko The Series*, which has been released three seasons since its production by *Garis Sepuluh Corporation*. As of July 2023, the animation has garnered 2.18 million subscribers on YouTube. The second animation is *Ibra Berkisah*, which has been released one season since its launch on July 3, 2023, and already has 86.7 thousand subscribers on YouTube.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

As outlined in the literature review, this research focuses on the commodification of religion and Islamic animation. Islamic animation is regarded as a manifestation of the Islamization of popular culture. Hence, it is crucial to establish the definitions of Islamism and Post-Islamism before delving into the concept of pop-Islamism

²² Hilmy Firdausy, "Visualization of Understanding Hadith in Animated Cartoon," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 2 (2021): 219–44.

presented by Muller. Bassam Tibbi conceptualizes Islamism as political Islam, which employs liberal democracy, a system it fundamentally opposes, to carve out space for its movement. Additionally, Islamism can be understood as an ideology that asserts the integration of religion and the state within a political order based on Sharia law. Thus, Tibbi vehemently refutes equating Islam with Islamism.²³

According to Oliver Roy, Islamism emerged as a response to resistance against modernity, secularism, and moral degradation, which explains the appeal of the Islamists' call for a "back to Islam." Bayat's perspective on Islamism as Islamic activism emphasizes its fluid and dynamic nature, continually adapting to the evolving context. This adaptability and transformation form what Bayat refers to as Post-Islamism. Post-Islamism represents the second wave of Islamism, focusing on cultural aspects and prioritizing the piety of individual Muslims. It is not antagonistic toward Islam but rather accommodates modernity. Consequently, Post-Islamism emerges as an alternative discourse that resonates with tech-savvy and educated Muslim youth, who tend to favor a synthesis of Islam and modernity over the utopian vision of establishing an Islamic state.²⁴

In the era of cultural convergence,²⁵ popular culture products are intertwined across multiple platforms such as television, films, books, websites, and social media.²⁶ Previously, popular culture was considered inferior to high culture produced by cultural centres and mainly catered to populist audiences. However, with increasing industrialization and globalization, the growth of popular culture has been associated with corporatization and commodification. International industries in urban areas capitalize on popular culture as a profitable commodity,

²³ Bassam Tibbi, *Islamism and Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

²⁴ Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007); Asef Bayat, "Post-Islamist at Large," in *Post-Islamism the Changing Faces of Political Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.), 3–34.

²⁵ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, 1. publ. in paperback 2008, updated with a new afterword [Repr.] (New York: New York University Press, 20).

²⁶ Robin Redmon Wright, "Popular Culture, Adult Learning, and Identity Development," in *The Palgrave International Handbook on Adult and Lifelong Education and Learning*, ed. Marcella Milana et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 971–89, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55783-4_50.

using the media as a driving force to shape reality and stimulate the masses. Mass media is institutionally used to promote specific products, foster consumer communities, and perpetuate consumerism.²⁷

In the context of negotiating Islamic identity with globalism, the popular culture approach has been utilized. This negotiation has given rise to what is known as popular Islamic culture, which encompasses a wide range of products, including fashion, music, films, language styles, and everyday behaviour. Three distinct ideologies shape the identity of popular Islamic culture: 1) Salafi-Traditionalist prioritize religious symbols and tend to form ideological communities, 2) Modernists focus on the adaptation and acculturation of modern values with Islam, and 3) Post-Islamism emphasizes the synergy between Islam, modernism, democracy, and plurality.²⁸

In the context of Islamic popular culture identity formation, Müller introduced pop Islamism, which is different from the three previous ideologies. The theory offered by Muller is the result of his findings while researching the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), a conservative Islamic party in Malaysia. The party changed its strategy in attracting the masses by shifting from Islamism in the political realm to individual expressions of piety in the public sphere. Muller claims that his pop-Islamism is similar to Bayat's post-Islamism, featuring expressions of personal piety. However, the aspiration of political Islam to be applied in the state's life is still inherent in pop Islamism.²⁹

Pop-Islamism offered by Muller is the same as what Ariel Heryanto has introduced. As Ariel Heryanto explains, Bayat's post-Islamism, as a theoretical framework, can be used to analyse the Indonesian case with some modifications

²⁷ Bagus Mustakim, "Animasi Nussa: Islamisme Populer, Habitus, Dan Identitas Dalam Pengasuhan Anak Usia Dini" (doctoral, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2022), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/59198/>.

²⁸ Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Islam Populer Sebagai Pencarian Identitas Muslim Kelas Menengah Indonesia," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 1 (June 5, 2015): 139–63, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2015.5.1.139-163>.

²⁹ Dominik M. Müller, "Post-Islamism or Pop-Islamism? Ethnographic Observations of Muslim Youth Politics in Malaysia," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde* 59 (2013): 261–84; Dominik M. Müller, *Islam, Politics and Youth in Malaysia: The Pop-Islamist Reinvention of PAS*, Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series (Milton Park, Abingdon ; New York: Routledge, 2014).

and adjustments. He suggests distinguishing between political post-Islamism, Bayat's concern, and cultural post-Islamism, which encompasses both the high culture of the intellectual elite and the low culture that finds its expression in entertainment and everyday popular lifestyles.³⁰

Greg Fealy initially introduced the concept of religious commodification in his article "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pets in Contemporary Indonesia," published in the book *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*. Fealy defines commodification as transforming religious symbols into commercial objects or trade commodities. It includes packaging these symbols in an attractive way for consumption and profit.³¹ Concerning the commodification of religion, Pittiana Kitiarsa explains that

“Multifaceted and multidimensional marketized process which turns a religious faith or tradition into consumable and marketable goods. It is an interactive and iterative relationship between religion and market, simultaneously involving both market forces commodifying religion and religious institutions taking part in marketplace and consuming culture.”³²

One of the driving factors behind the commodification of religion is the significant market potential within religious communities. In the case of this research, there is considerable market potential among Muslim families in Indonesia, which creates a new business opportunity to market Islamic values in the form of Islamic animation for children. The commodification of Islamic values in Indonesian Islamic animation plays an essential role in fulfilling the needs of Muslim families in viewing that can serve as guidance.

³⁰ Ariel Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*, Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies / Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University 13 (Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto University Press Japan, 2014).

³¹ Fealy, “2. Consuming Islam.”

³² Pattana Kitiarsa, “Toward a Sociology of Religious Commodification,” in *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2010), 563–83, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444320787.ch25>.

1.6 Research Significance

The findings of this research have uses and contributions to several fields of study as follows.

1. In the field of Islamism research, this study can serve as a theoretical basis for describing the phenomenon of Islamism that has recently appeared to dominate the public sphere. Until now, Islamism has often been seen as a monolithic practice. The use of Islamic symbols is often perceived as a rigid and radical religious act, whereas in reality, Islamism is practiced in many different ways. The standard theory of Islamism used as a theoretical framework in this study shows that Islamism has shifted from politics to personal piety. This research found a shift in generalized Islamism from the use of solid religious symbols to the use of fluid religious symbols that merge with modernity. It can change one's perception of Islamist symbols in the public sphere. These symbols do not always show rigid and radical attitudes as they have been perceived. Suppose previous studies on Islamism often labelled individuals who use Islamist symbols as radical. In that case, this study provides a theoretical framework that they are not necessarily or not entirely rigid and radical. Indonesian Islamic Animation is not easily classified into the simple categories of Islamism, post-Islamism and now, pop-Islamism. My study shows that the features of the three concepts are apparent in my cases as the actors negotiate their ideology with market demand and broader socio-political contexts.
2. In the field of religious commodification research, this study offers the view that Islamic da'wa can go hand in hand with the religious commodification. To date, the religious commodification is often seen as the practice of commercializing religion, which has implications for the fading of the sacredness of religion and its teachings. Not only that, Islamisation is often confronted with commercialization which is considered like water and oil that cannot be dissolved together. The impacts of religious commodification are still debated by the scholars, particularly, whether the commodification of religion has led to more exclusive or inclusive Islam. This research contributes to this debate by finding a confluence between da'wa and religious

commodification. Indonesian Islamic animation is indeed a means of da'wa for Muslim families who are looking for content to be used as guidance for their children. However, the costly production costs certainly require the production team to open space for markets and cooperation with external parties to continue to spread Islamic values through video animation.

1.7 Research Methodology

I use qualitative methods to examine some of the research questions and to obtain data, I use online interviews and observations.³³ These research tools help me explore and understand who are behind Islamic animation, and how they reconcile da'wa and the religious commodification.

As explained earlier, interviews were the first method to answer the research questions. Gray explains that interviews are an essential data collection method in many studies.³⁴ However, interviews gather data and ideas.³⁵ Interviews are conducted with the producer and marketing director of each animation. The second method I used to obtain data was online observation. The online observation was conducted by watching the ten most-watched videos of the animation and monitoring the comments on the official Instagram accounts of the Islamic animation and the posts of netizens who tagged the animation's official Instagram accounts. In addition, I also traced the digital footprints of the people I interviewed, such as seeing whom they followed on Instagram and what kind of posts they uploaded.

In this research, some ethical factors need serious attention. Important matters such as the purpose of the research and how the interview data is managed should be communicated to participants before the interview. In addition, participants' consent must be obtained before conducting online observations of their Instagram accounts. Once the data is obtained, it is stored on a personal laptop with adequate

³³ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Fifth edition (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018).

³⁴ Ann Gray, *Research Practice for Cultural Studies: Ethnographic Methods and Lived Cultures* (Sage, 2002).

³⁵ Alrimawi, "Issues of Representation in Arab Animation Cinema."

password security. Meanwhile, the questions to be asked to the participants should also be well thought out in advance, in terms of order and tone, so that participants feel comfortable and open when answering, even for more sensitive and personal topics.

This study is designed to be conducted over three months. In the first month, I conduct a systematic literature review on Islamic animation, da'wa, and the commodification of religion. The results of this review provide specific information for further research, including additional areas that can be explored through interviews and specific questions. In the second month, the majority of time is spent collecting data by conducting online interviews and observations. Finally, in the third month, time is spent analyzing the data, writing a report on the results, and participating in conferences and seminars relevant to the research topic.

1.8 Thesis Outline

This research is organized into four chapters, each comprising sub-chapters that address specific aspects of the formulated research problem. The subtopics in each chapter are interrelated and contribute to the overall focus of the discussion in that chapter. The following is a systematic overview of the contents discussed in each chapter, following the order in which the research problem has been formulated.

Chapter 1 contains an introduction that presents the background of the research, explaining the problem and objectives. In the literature review, the position of this research is described in the context of related themes explored in previous studies. Then the theoretical framework is used to analyze the social phenomenon under study. Then the research's significance presents the contribution to the more considerable scientific discussion. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research methodology used and a detailed description of the research design and procedures.

Chapter 2 delves into the rise of the Muslim Middle Class in Indonesia. This section provides an in-depth exploration of the Islamisation of popular culture, which serves as a broad framework for understanding the case of Indonesian

Islamic animation and the commodification of religion. Additionally, the chapter explores the concepts of Islamism, Post-Islamism, and Pop-Islamism. Subsequently, it traces the emergence and evolution of Islamic animation within the Indonesian context.

Chapter 3 discusses present a profiling and detailed description of Riko The Series and Ibra Berkisah. Then this chapter also discusses the key actors involved in the production of these animations and how they propagate Islam. This section also describe the negotiation between da'wa and religious commodification conducted by the production team.

Chapter 4 is the conclusion. The research findings are summarised, and suggestions are given. The conclusion section is divided into three subsections according to the problem mapping outlined in the research problem formulation. The first subsection focuses on the actors behind Riko The Series and Ibra Berkisah. The second subsection presents conclusions regarding how these animations propagate Islam. The third subsection discusses the conclusions from the negotiation and alignment between da'wa and religious commodification. Finally, this chapter presents academic recommendations for future research endeavours, suggesting areas that can be further developed and explored in this field.

CHAPTER II

THE MUSLIM MIDDLE CLASS AND ISLAMIZED POPULAR CULTURE

2.1 The Muslim Middle Class and Its Rise in Indonesia

The phenomenon of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia began to be widely discussed after the reformation and has been increasing over the past decade. The emergence of the Muslim middle class is due to three factors: trade, Hajj travelling and education.³⁶ The rise of the Muslim middle class is happening in Indonesia and several countries with Muslim-majority populations, such as Malaysia, Qatar, Turkey, Iran, and others. According to Vali Nasr, this phenomenon is a breath of fresh air from the Middle East, which, after 9/11, was portrayed as the origin of radicalism and terrorism in the world. The growing middle class is expected to strengthen the country's economy and promote democracy and human rights.³⁷

Azyumardi Azra explained that the term "new Muslim middle class" used by Vali Nasr signifies that there was an old Muslim middle class which certainly had differences between the two. Although Vali Nasr did not explain the difference, Azra attempted to elaborate. According to Azra, consumerism is a distinctive feature of the new Muslim middle class that sets it apart from the old middle class. Some of the new Muslim middle class are suspected to have high purchasing power and information literacy, making them sufficiently exposed to changes in social, economic, and political conditions.³⁸

In contrast to Nasr and Azra, Ariel Heryanto prefers to refer to this group as the "new rich," which signifies the formation of a new idea of modern Indonesian

³⁶ Wasisto Raharjo Jati, *Politik kelas menengah Muslim Indonesia* (LP3ES (Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial), 2017).

³⁷ Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54880-1>.

³⁸ Oki Setiana Dewi, "Pengajian selebritas hijrah kelas menengah muslim (2000-2019): respons atas dakwah Salafi dan Jamaah Tabligh" (Doctoral Thesis, Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2020), <https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/54401>.

Muslims. The main characteristic of this group is their rejection of exclusive and extremist Islam. They strongly desire to consume non-Islamic industrial products while still displaying their religiosity. For instance, they perform Hajj and Umrah with special facilities, hold recitations in star hotels, and wear expensive Muslim clothing. Such a consumptive style contributes to the growth of the commodification of Islam.³⁹

The commodification of Islam refers to transforming Islam and its symbols into something traded for profit. Thus, it is unsurprising that Islamic industries and products are growing rapidly and expanding in various sectors, such as Islamic economics and finance, halal food, the hijab industry, Islamic hotels, etc.⁴⁰ This phenomenon provides an interesting insight into the middle-class Muslim community, as they consider Islamic values and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad as determining factors in their purchasing and consumption decisions. Whether a product is halal, in accordance with Sharia, or not has become a factor that concerns them in their buying decisions. It occurs not only among the Indonesian Muslim middle class but also in Egypt, as discovered by Bayat. Some businesses, educational institutions, or media that use the "Islamic" label have succeeded in attracting customers and gaining public trust, which is considered a blessing by the sellers.⁴¹

Another inherent characteristic of the Muslim middle class is high social solidarity. There are at least two factors underlying this. First, giving is a form of caring for others, and Islam encourages it. Second, giving and helping others have become easier through sharing platforms that facilitate fundraising. The last characteristic is active piety. Bayat uses this term to describe middle-class Muslims in Egypt who practice their faith, share it, and strive to involve others.⁴² In line with Bayat, Howell explains that active piety has been displayed in television preaching

³⁹ Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure*.

⁴⁰ Fealy, "2. Consuming Islam."

⁴¹ Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁴² Bayat.

in Indonesia after the reformation. Some preachers, such as Ustaz Jefry Al-Buchori (Uje), Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym), and Ustaz Yusuf Mansur (UYM), play a significant role in instilling and fostering active piety among young men and women from the middle to the upper class. The stories of repentance and emotional worship that encourage sobbing are the uniqueness and appeal of these preachers.⁴³

2.2 Islamisation of Popular Culture and the Commodification of Islam

The phenomenon of "Islamisation" has become one of the most interesting areas of study for scholars in Indonesia. It refers to the efforts to encourage people to follow the teachings of Islam and accept Islamic principles as the guiding force in individual, social, and political life. For some Muslims, Islam is not merely a ritualistic religion but also a philosophy and a way of life. Islam demands that its followers embrace it (*Islam Kaffah*). This definition of Islamisation encompasses re-Islamisation, which involves making nominal Muslims more devout.⁴⁴

When discussing the phenomenon of Islamisation in Indonesia, some scholars argue that it has shaped the public sphere by expanding Islamic values and politics within the country. In contrast to Bruinessen's perspective on the emergence of conservative Islam following the Suharto regime,⁴⁵ this process of Islamisation is closely tied to the policies pursued by Suharto in the 1990s. During this period, Suharto adopted Islamic symbolism by adding 'Muhammad' to his name and performing the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Additionally, his daughter wore the veil in her daily life. It was reflected in the emergence of Islam-related Indonesian products in the public sphere, such as Bank Muallamat, Muslim fashion boutiques, and the establishment of the organization ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-

⁴³ Julia D. Howell, "Modulations of Active Piety: Professors and Televangelists as Promoters of Indonesian 'Sufisme,'" in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, 2008.

⁴⁴ Yon Machmudi, "Islamising Indonesian: The Rise of Jemaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)" (Doctoral Thesis, ANU Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_459299.

⁴⁵ Martin van Bruinessen, ed., *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

Indonesia).⁴⁶ Before this, during Suharto's leadership in the 1980s, Islam was suppressed.⁴⁷

After the fall of the Suharto regime, there was a resurgence of Islamic popular culture in Indonesia, which was linked to creating a power vacuum. As a result, forms of religious expression that were previously inhibited could now be freely expressed. Capitalist interests sought to accommodate and capitalize on the increased growth of religious expression and the Islamisation of the public sphere. It can be observed in the significant contributions of capitalist industries, such as private television channels airing Islamic soap operas, private print and radio media, and the declining dominance of the Indian film industry in Indonesian cinema. Moreover, new religious authorities sought to influence Indonesian Muslims through Islamic magazines like *Annida*, *Hidayatullah*, *Noor*, *Sabili*, and *Ummi*. These magazines strongly influenced Islamic discourse for several years before the advent of digital platforms halted their impact.⁴⁸

Fealy and White note that Islamisation in Indonesian popular culture has had a significant cultural and spiritual impact compared to previous decades. However, sustaining this influence in the political sphere has proven challenging as many secular parties have successfully adopted an Islamic agenda.⁴⁹ In this context, Heryanto presents an alternative approach to understanding these two forces. According to Heryanto, this dynamic represents a "dialectic between how religious piety finds its expression in the specific historical context of Indonesian industrial capitalism and how capitalist logic responds to market developments to renew and revitalize Islamic lifestyles."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400823871>.

⁴⁷ Wahyudi Akmaliah, "Indonesian Muslim Killings: Revisiting the Forgotten Talang Sari Tragedy (1989) and Its Impact in Post Authoritarian Regime," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 6, no. 1 (June 1, 2016): 1–34, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v5i2.1-34>.

⁴⁸ Wahyudi Akmaliah, "When Islamism and Pop Culture Meet: A Political Framing of the Movie '212: The Power of Love,'" *Studia Islamika* 27, no. 1 (April 7, 2020): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v27i1.9205>.

⁴⁹ Greg Fealy, Sally White, and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, Indonesia Update Series (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).

⁵⁰ Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure*.

In the process of this interaction, the dynamics between these two forces are inevitable. In some cases, Islamic and capitalist forces have adapted to each other while still vying for dominance. However, they have also reached agreements and mutually reinforced each other. Citing Daromir Rudnycky on Islamic piety, Heryanto concludes that both can provide "a renewed commitment to hard work, self-discipline, productivity in the workplace, and an inclusive attitude towards others in the world."⁵¹

Some social scholars have explained the emergence of the Islamisation phenomenon in Indonesia by arguing that the piety of Muslim communities has always been closely linked to the influence of the entertainment industry and the process of religious commodification. Fealy (2008) explains the strong connection between the commodification of religious symbols and the revival of religious life in Indonesia, which differs from previous eras. In essence, the commodification of Islam involves "the commercialization of religion, where religious beliefs or symbols are turned into commodities that can be traded for profit." Fealy asserts that the relationship between commodities and religion is complex and not exclusive to Islam. To avoid misinterpretation, Fealy emphasizes that the commodification of Islam refers to the economic-religious aspect of transactions, where certain symbols of faith are used as market products associated with Islam.⁵²

Commodification is a process in which objects, qualities, and signs are transformed into commodities primarily meant to be sold in the marketplace.⁵³ In the context of religion, it involves selling religious qualities for profit. However, according to Kitiarsa, religious commodification is complex historical and cultural construction despite the commercial features. While acknowledging that commodification "can be socially and culturally disruptive and destabilizing," Kitiarsa emphasizes considering the integration of religious and economic values when assessing the symbolic intimacy of the market.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Heryanto.

⁵² Fealy, "2. Consuming Islam."

⁵³ Chris Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (Sage, 2004).

⁵⁴ Pattana Kitiarsa, ed., *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, Routledge Studies in Asian Religion and Philosophy (London ; New York: Routledge, 2008).

Nevertheless, commodification may be necessary for religion to withstand the influence of contemporary consumer culture. Consumption is an important marker of identity, social status, and political affiliation, especially among the urban "new Muslim middle class".⁵⁵ From another perspective, Indonesian Muslims seek visibility and legitimacy in the national public sphere. In this case, Islam is presented in a sophisticated, fresh, and hybrid manner, making it an appealing alternative to urban and capitalist culture.⁵⁶

As a result, the increasing religious expression in the Indonesian public sphere through the consumption of various Islam-based products is a consequence of the commodification of religion. Symbolically, Islam has become a lucrative market due to its status as the religion of the majority in Indonesia. The successful commodification of Islamic symbols has transformed how the current generation of urban Muslims expresses their faith compared to previous generations.⁵⁷

A distinct characteristic of the commodification of Islam is the rising level of piety in Indonesian society, which influences the increased consumption of products emphasizing Islamic values. Moreover, the impressive phenomenon of Islamic revival has contributed to the popularity and high demand for Islamic commodification products in the market. In other words, the commodification of Islam can be understood as both a product and a cause of the phenomenon. This cycle is interconnected and often returns to its starting point.⁵⁸

Examples of the commodification of Islam include the works of Ronald Lukens-Bull and Akh Muzakki. Lukens-Bull identifies two patterns of commodification in religious messages conveyed through stickers. The first pattern involves producing specific goods and adding religious identity to the product, intending to convey nationalism, religion, or ethnicity. The second pattern starts with certain values and then seeks ways to produce products that align with those values. The commodification of religion occurs when religious values are realized,

⁵⁵ Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam."

⁵⁶ Hasan.

⁵⁷ Fealy, "2. Consuming Islam."

⁵⁸ Fealy.

turning the meaning and ideology of religion into a tradable commodity.⁵⁹ Akh Muzakki discusses commodification in the context of Friday sermons, revealing the presence of commodification within religious practices. He highlights how preachers and congregations engage in economic and cultural exchanges as part of religious practice. Numerous studies have explored the link between the rise of social piety and the commercialization of religious symbols.⁶⁰

Overall, the approach that sees the rise of piety in Indonesia due to the commodification of religion is based on several premises. Firstly, Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia. Second, there has been an increase in economic status among middle-class Muslims. Third, this condition is considered a potential market for producing religious needs for the Muslim community. Fourth, besides producing for the Islamic market, capital also creates symbolic narratives associated with Islamic values. Fifth, the development of internet technology and new media increasingly support the massive consumption of Islamic products. Thus, the rise of Islamic expressions in the public sphere, on the one hand, is the result of the success of the commodification of religion, not merely a symptom born from the religious process of the community itself.

2.3 Islamism, Post-Islamism, and Pop-Islamism

Gilles Kepel defines *Islamism* as a thought, discourse, action, and movement involving a group of Muslim individuals operating under the same ideology.⁶¹ In line with this definition, Oliver Roy adds that these thoughts and actions lead to establishing an Islamic state. This view is based on the belief of some Muslims that Islam is not only a religion but also a state (*ad-din wa ad-daulah*). Therefore, Roy aligns Islamism with the world's major political ideologies, such as socialism, capitalism, and communism. In Roy's view, the notion of an Islamic state has an extensive scope, including changes in the format and political system based on

⁵⁹ Lukens-Bull, "Commodification of Religion and the 'religification' of Commodities."

⁶⁰ Muzakki, "Islam As A Symbolic Commodity."

⁶¹ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Islamic principles or the presence of Islamic symbols in people's thoughts and daily activities.⁶²

Furthermore, Noorhaidi Hasan explains that Islamism emphasizes a holistic lifestyle so that a Muslim or a group of Muslims must strictly follow the provisions of God manifested through sharia.⁶³ Therefore, this group is quite attached to the slogan of returning to the Quran and Sunnah and the practices of the early generations of Muslims, which are considered the most authentic and pure form of Islam.

Indeed, Islamism is not immune to the manipulation of religious symbols that lead to violence, but this does not mean that Islamism is synonymous with or even inherently violent. It is exacerbated by incidents of terrorism, such as 9/11 in the United States and the Bali bombings in Indonesia. These events have reinforced the view that Islamism is another form of radicalism and terrorism. On this basis, Daniel M. Varisco criticizes the use of the term Islamism, which is considered very close to violence. According to him, this term arises from prejudice and hostility towards Muslim societies that emerged and developed since medieval times.⁶⁴

Asef Bayat defines *Islamism* as Islamic activism that aims, both individually and collectively, to encourage change in the existing social and political system. From this definition, activism becomes a noteworthy term because, according to him, Islamism is not static and frozen but dynamic and fluid. It continues to shift and change along with the changing context.⁶⁵

Furthermore, Bayat explains that after the Arab Spring, Islamism underwent an Islamist transformation. In the political context of several Muslim countries, some Islamic parties have shifted to a more moderate position and gained support

⁶² Noorhaidi Hasan, "Introduction: Towards Popular Islamism," in *Islamic Literatures of The Millennials: Transmission, Appropriation, and Contestation* (Jakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta Graduate Department – PusPIDep UNDP – Convey Indonesia – PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2018), 1–20.

⁶³ Noorhaidi Hasan, *Islam Politik Di Dunia Kontemporer: Konsep, Genealogi, Dan Teori*, Cetakan pertama (Yogyakarta: Suka-Press, 2012).

⁶⁴ Hasan, "Introduction: Towards Popular Islamism."

⁶⁵ A. Bayat, "What Is Post-Islamism?," *ISIM Review* 16, no. 1 (2005): 5–5; Asef Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement Theory," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 6 (September 2005): 891–908, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500089240>.

from the Muslim community. Even Saudi Arabia, a petro-dollar country that initially actively spread Wahabism, is now showing signs of a shift towards post-Islamism by accommodating various aspects, from recognizing women's rights to supporting moderate Islamic campaigns.

Asef Bayat predicted this shift with the theory of Post-Islamism that he introduced two decades ago. According to him, the pattern of Islamic activism that was originally collective and revolutionary will shift to Islamic activism that is more individualized and accommodates modern life. Therefore, post-Islamism can be understood as how a Muslim simultaneously becomes a pious person and a modern human being.⁶⁶

In line with Asef Bayat, Nilufer Gole argues that post-Islamism is a second-wave form of political Islam that is culturally oriented and emphasizes the practice of individual Muslim piety.⁶⁷ Asef Bayat offers post-Islamism as an analytical construct to see and understand the shift of political Islam to a new direction that synergizes the discourse of Islamic revival with the development of secular education, the presence of modernity accompanied by market values, and elements of democracy in the Islamic world. However, it should be underlined that post-Islamism does not mean being anti-Islam, but is understood as an acceptance of new elements of modernity and support for strengthening the personal piety of a Muslim.

Oliver Roy argues that Islamism, as a political ideology, collapsed due to its supporters' disillusionment with the Islamic state, which was considered utopian by young, educated Muslims. New media, which emerged from modernization and globalization, has made young educated Muslims open their eyes and reject the top-

⁶⁶ Asef Bayat, "The Coming of a Post-Islamist Society," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 5, no. 9 (September 1996): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10669929608720091>; Bayat, "What Is Post-Islamism?"

⁶⁷ Hasan, "Introduction: Towards Popular Islamism"; Nilufer Gole, "Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 173–90; Nilufer Gole, "European Self-Presentations and Narratives Challenged by Islam. Secular Modernity in Question," in *Decolonizing European Sociology: Transdisciplinary Approaches* (Farnham: Ashgate, n.d.), 102–15.

down command structure of Islamism.⁶⁸ Thus, post-Islamism seems to be emerging as an alternative discourse that educated Muslim youth tend to favor. Without a doubt, they abandon the vision of establishing an Islamic state that is considered utopian and tends to lead to a synthesis process between Islam and modernity.

In the context of identity formation within Islamic popular culture, Müller has introduced the concept of pop Islamism, distinguishing itself from the three previous ideologies. The theory put forth by Müller stems from his research on the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), a conservative Islamic party in Malaysia. Through his study, Müller observed a shift in the party's approach to attracting the masses, moving away from political Islamism and emphasizing individual expressions of piety within the public sphere. According to Müller, his concept of pop Islamism shares similarities with Bayat's post-Islamism, as it encompasses personal acts of piety. However, pop Islamism still maintains the aspiration of political Islam to be implemented within the realm of state affairs.⁶⁹

2.4 Animation in Indonesia: An Overview

The word "animation" comes from the Latin word *animare* which means "to turn on" or "to give breath".⁷⁰ Thus, animation can be defined as an effort to animate or give the impression or illusion of life or movement from still images or inanimate objects.⁷¹ Another definition was also offered by Norman McLaren who stated that "*Animation is not the art of drawing that moves, but rather the art of movement that is drawn. What happens between each frame is more important than what happens on each frame*".⁷²

⁶⁸ Olivier Roy, "The Transformation of the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 3 (2012): 5–18, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2012.0056>; Olivier Roy, "There Will Be No Islamist Revolution," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 1 (2013): 14–19, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2013.0009>.

⁶⁹ Müller, "Post-Islamism or Pop-Islamism?"; Dominik M. Müller, *Islam, Politics and Youth in Malaysia: The Pop-Islamist Reinvention of PAS*, Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series (Milton Park, Abingdon ; New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁷⁰ Jean Wright, *Animation Writing and Development: From Screen Development to Pitch*, Focal Press Visual Effects and Animation (Amsterdam ; Boston: Focal Press, 2005).

⁷¹ Arik Kurnianto, "Tinjauan Singkat Perkembangan Animasi Indonesia Dalam Konteks Animasi Dunia," *Humaniora* 6, no. 2 (n.d.): 240–48.

⁷² Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1998).

Historically, animated films have experienced relatively rapid development since "Matches: An Appeal" was made by Arthur Melbourne-Cooper in 1899. This animation was the first short animation made using the stop motion technique. Then, in 1906, James Stuart Blackton, an American cartoonist, made "Humorous Phases of Funny Faces", the first image-based animation (hand drawn animation). The first feature-length animated film in Germany in 1926 was "Adventures of Prince Achmed," produced by Lotte Reiniger. While the first full-length color animated film that aired worldwide was "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," produced by Walt Disney in 1937.⁷³

Animated films initially used simple techniques, visuals, stories, media and technology, but have changed over time. The change from simple to complex, especially when television was discovered as a new electronic medium in the 1950s. This phase only lasted for three decades until the advent of digital technology in the 1980s. However, the impact of this new technology was only seen in the 1990s with the advent of visual effects. In 1995, the Pixar animation studio successfully produced the first 3-dimensional long animated film with the title "Toy Story."

Even though animated films have only passed one century since their first appearance in 1899, their developments and changes in the complexity of forms, animated motion, media, stories, and technology have far surpassed previous eras. Thanks to the presence of digital technology, visual imaginations that could not be realized in previous eras are now genuine, especially when viewed from the details and movements that seem to transcend reality.

Talking about animation in Indonesia can be seen from three different perspectives: animation in Indonesia, animation made in Indonesia, and animation made by Indonesians. Animated films have been imported and shown in Indonesian cinemas since the Dutch colonial period. Then, after Indonesia's independence on August 17, 1945, efforts to make local animation began.

The history of making animation in Indonesia began in 1955, when Soekarno, the first president of the Republic of Indonesia, paid an official visit to the United

⁷³ Kurnianto, "Tinjauan Singkat Perkembangan Animasi Indonesia Dalam Konteks Animasi Dunia."

States and took time to visit Disneyland. He was greeted directly by Walt Disney. Soekarno was the first president to visit Disneyland. Upon returning from the visit, Soekarno assigned Dukut Hendronoto to study animation directly at the Disney studio.⁷⁴

Returning from his internship at Disney in the United States, Dukut Hendronoto began buying various equipment needed to produce animated films. Several successful animated films have been produced that are all less than five minutes long and are mostly propaganda in nature. "Si Doel Memilih" is one of them. This two-dimensional animated film told the story of the first general election campaign in Indonesia and became the starting point for modern animation in Indonesia. However, the animated documentation "Si Doel Memilih," considered the first animation in Indonesia, cannot be traced, causing controversy about its history. Is it the first animation in Indonesia? Is it true that it exists in history while the documentation cannot be found?⁷⁵

Dukut Hendronoto realized he needed cadres who would continue making the animated films he pioneered. So, he taught the animation skills he had acquired during his apprenticeship at Disney Studios to Saleh Hasan and several other artists at the Film Center. Furthermore, Pak Ook (the name for Dukut Hendronoto) switched to TVRI, the only television station in Indonesia, in 1963, where he developed animation in one of his programs. The program, however, was eventually banned as it was deemed too costly.⁷⁶

Around 1970, TVRI finally started showing films produced by Walt Disney and Hanna-Barbera. At the same time, a new advertising policy was established at TVRI, which resulted in the program "Mana Suka Siaran Niaga," the first national advertisement using animation. This illustrates that animation development in Indonesia must be integrated with the development of television as a new medium. At that time, there was an attempt to produce an animated series. Media

⁷⁴ Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Animation: A World History*, vol. 2 (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

⁷⁵ Kurnianto, "Tinjauan Singkat Perkembangan Animasi Indonesia Dalam Konteks Animasi Dunia."

⁷⁶ Bendazzi, *Animation*, 2017.

Animationndo partnered with Pro Animationndo to produce Satria Nusantara (Prajurit Nusantara), directed by Astobudi and Dian Cahyo. The animation revolves around a superhero who can fly, like the mythical son of Bima in the Indian epic Mahabharata.⁷⁷

Two years after animation from abroad was broadcasted by the state-owned television station Drs. Suyadi (Pak Raden) created a team that made several animated films. One is about family planning education which was worked on with Prof. Dr. RM. Sularko, a dentist also chairman of the Federation of Indonesian Photograph Associations (FPSI). Some of these animated films were made at a Training Aid Center (TAC) under UNICEF.⁷⁸

In the same year, Anima Indah, an advertising agency, began producing advertisements for cinema and television. Some are in animation, or at least there are animation elements. Some of the advertisements advertised are Filopur water filters, BIC ballpoint pens, DUSAL tablets, and Abriscor vitamin C. The advertising agency Anima Indah only lasted ten years before closing.⁷⁹

In mid-1968, the Jakarta Arts Council was founded. Four years later, in 1972, the Mini Film Festival was held; it resulted in a spike in interest in making short films that included animation. Several people also tried it, including Dwi Koendoro, who produced Batu (Rock), Kayak Bear (Bear's Raft), and Trondolo, which combines animation and live action. In the following years, several animations began to emerge. Some of them are the animated film Putrid Sang Frog, which Gota and Moly Surawidjaja made, students of the Bandung Institute of Technology, A Pair of Gotot Prakosa Horns (A Pair of Horns), Impuls (Impulse), Stripes (Stripes).⁸⁰

Lukman Latief Keele, an American interested in Southeast Asian culture, helped Denny A. Djunaid, Wagiono Sunarto, Darmoro Sudarsono, Purnomohadi, Partono, and others produce animated films. In 1976, they received further guidance

⁷⁷ Kurnianto, "Tinjauan Singkat Perkembangan Animasi Indonesia Dalam Konteks Animasi Dunia."

⁷⁸ Kurnianto.

⁷⁹ Bendazzi, *Animation*, 2017.

⁸⁰ Bendazzi.

from Clair Weeks, a Disney animator who traveled around Asian countries conducting workshops. (book) Then Denny A. Djunaid won a scholarship to study animation at the Richard Williams studio in England. One of his mentors was Disney veteran Art Babbit, who taught at the studio then. Later, Djunaid visited the Walt Disney facility in Burbank.

Dwi Koendoro, a well-known political cartoonist, film director, editor, and composer, was interested in animated films and decided to get involved by establishing the Citra Audivistama studio. His first project was collaborating with Si Unyil, a puppet animation made by Suyadi. Suyadi had studied animation in France, where the works of Trnka and Chinese shadow puppets influenced him. Si Unyil tells the story of a boy with brilliant ideas to solve the villagers' problems. Rural residents are the main target of the animated film, which carries the main message from the government that villagers can be independent.

In the 1980-1990s, several animation studios appeared in various regions, such as Bening Studio in Yogyakarta, Tegal Cartoon in Tegal, and Red Rocket Animation Studio in Bandung. One of the animated films produced then was "Jungle The Child of Space." The animated film was directed by Wagiono Sunarto and was shown as a television series at that time.

Entering the 1990s, several animated films were born, although they were not very popular among Indonesians. The legends of Buriswara, Nariswandi Piliang, and Satria Nusantara are three examples. During this period, Indonesia also had its first 3D animated film, the Hela, Heli, Helo series, produced in Surabaya. The world of animation, which was entirely developed then, succeeded in encouraging several animators to create animations based on folk tales, such as Timun Mas, Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih, and others. Not only that, but several Indonesian animators also had their roots in the world of animation by working on Doraemon and Pocket Monster, two Japanese animations that were quite popular among Indonesian audiences through their broadcast on private television.⁸¹

⁸¹ Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Animation: A World History*, vol. 3 (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

In the early 1990s, Dwi Koendoro's Citra Audivistama was a private animation company in Indonesia. Only a few things exist except for the government's State Film Production Center. Several obstacles to developing the animation industry in Indonesia include the high production costs required; lack of trust from foreign and Indonesian businesses in local animation; the public belief that animation should not be recognized as a profession; and insufficient training. Koendoro created an elaborate training scheme as part of Citra Audivistama to remedy the latter.

At that time, Daniel Haryanto collaborated with Andi Rukmana to make live animated films for video compact discs (VCD). Among the many series produced were the famous Timun Mas, Si Kancil, and Puri Magic. Several studio houses soon sprang up and created their series. Among them are Planet Karton Studio, Travel Studio, and De Dans.

Mohammad (Haluk) Yuwono started Index Production House in Surabaya, East Java. He created commercials and the computer-animated TV series Hela, Heli, and Helo with computers and a small crew. In addition, Studio Yuwono made a pilot episode titled Bima 2000 based on wayang kulit, and a series on the Nine Saints of Java was made.⁸²

In 1995, Nurliswandi Piliang formed PT Potlot Nasional to produce an animated series, Buriswara, based on classic stories in wayang kulit. A year later, Asiana-Wang was founded by a Taiwanese animation company to outsource Hollywood and Japanese films. This is a boon for the Indonesian animation world because it opens up job opportunities for animators and other personnel, and there are efforts to create uniquely Indonesian characters.

In the following decades, the animation industry experienced a relatively rapid increase. Until 2001 alone, 250 studio houses appeared in Jakarta. Although domestic animation is increasing, foreign animation still dominates the domestic market and influences Indonesia's style, format, and stories. The effect is apparent. For example, the two winning works at the first Indonesian animation festival

⁸² Bendazzi.

resembled Japanese robot shows (Da Pupu and A Bug's Life). In 2009, one studio (CAM Solutions) created animated TV series modeled on Pixar's Cars (Tora Tori, with big trucks), Tom and Jerry (Bany), and Japanese animation (On Comm, another robot show).

Returning from studying animation in Canada in the early 1990s, Poppy Palele founded Red Rocket Animation in Bandung. In 2000, Red Rocket created a series including A Tale of Me and You, Clip and The Moon Princess, Why the Lamb Has the Horns, and Short Tail. Short Buttocks'), The Skinny ('Skinny'), and The Tiger ('Tiger'). Then in 2001, Red Rocket collaborated with Matahari Animation and Production Malaysia to make several short films with Malaysian elements. On the one hand, some of these animated films were successfully marketed and screened in several cinemas in Malaysia, but on the other hand, they were rejected at the Malaysian Film Festival because almost all those involved in the film were Indonesians. The collaboration continued and resulted in the film Budak Lapok ('The Raggedy Boys', 2006) before Red Rocket finally closed.⁸³

In 2003, Chandra Endoputra made Janus the Last Warrior ("Janus the Last Warrior"), a live-action computer-animated story about a boy and his toy robot. Then in May 2004, Studio Kasatmata succeeded in making the first 3D CGI feature, Tanah Air. It is about a boy, Earth, who inherits an honorable castle.

2.5 Indonesian Islamic Animation: From 2D to 3D

2.5.1 What makes an Animation Islamic?

Animation has become one of the most influential creative products of the 21st century. The term "animation" is often equated with "cartoon", even though the two terms have significant differences. Animation is a term used to describe the technological processes and visual forms used in film, industry, engineering, design, and advertising. Animation is a reasonably neutral term compared to

⁸³ Bendazzi.

cartoons loaded with meaning and closely related to strange content whose audience is primarily children.⁸⁴

In Arabic, the term "cartoon" denotes an animated film with a moving image, "al-Rusuum Al-Mutaharrikah", either a feature-length film or a series of short duration. Both terms are generally aimed at children, so it is considered a non-serious medium.⁸⁵ So, what are the criteria used to define an animation as "Islamic"? In such matters, the background of the creator is a crucial thing to know. If the creator is a Muslim, then there is a possibility that the animation can be defined as an Islamic animation. However, is not animation not only made by one person but made by a group of people and even produced by an animation studio house? Therefore, the criteria to label an animation as "Islamic" is when the animation is explicitly stated as an Islamic animation or teaches Islamic values to Muslim children and families.

2.5.2 Yufid Kids and the Rise of Indonesian Islamic Animation

Yufid Kids is part of Yufid Network, Indonesia's largest Salafi online company. Yufid was founded in 2009 by several IT graduates connected in study circles at the Al-Atsary Islamic Education Foundation (YPIA). It was fuelled by their desire to continue promoting the "true" teachings of Islam, following what was taught by the apostle of Allah and his companions. Producing and disseminating free digital da'wa content that anyone can consume is the primary goal of this association.

The word "Yufid", which is used as their name, is taken from the Arabic verb "يفيد" which means "to give faidah or benefit". The verb form used is fiil mudhari', which means work that is being done now or will be done in the future. Thus, the use of the name Yufid can be considered a reminder and a hope always to be able to provide benefits at this time and continue to do so in the future.

Legally, Yufid has been legalized as a legal entity under the name "Yayasan Yufid Network" by the Minister of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of

⁸⁴ Omar Adam Sayfo, *Arab Animation: Images of Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

⁸⁵ Jason Mittell, "Cartoon Realism: Genre Mixing and the Cultural Life of The Simpsons.," *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 47 (March 22, 2001): 15–29.

Indonesia, with no. AHU-0006780.50: AHU-0006780.50.80.2014 dated 27 October 2014.

The Yufid Kids Youtube channel joined the Youtube platform on 15 June 2017. The channel has 352 thousand subscribers and 76 uploaded videos with 102,078,724 views. On its official website, Yufid Kids describes its channel as providing Muslim children's learning videos suitable for children at home and school and for children's learning with exciting and creative entertainment media. The 2-Dimensional animation is the first animation series aired on Youtube, which explicitly makes Islamic values a form of originality and targets Muslim children as its target audience.

Yufid Kids animation is a regular flagship program the Yufid Network team produces. The production process of an animation video costs 8 million and lasts 14-28 days. The number of crews involved in the process is 8 people. The creative team is committed to presenting educational videos for children.

The animated videos by Yufid Kids contain messages of Islamic theology (aqidah) and ethics (akhlaq), adjusted to children's age level as the primary target. Simple and easy to understand is an essential part that the creative team pays attention to. They also claim that the animated videos they produce are different from other animated videos for children because they follow the rules of "sharia". Not using music and not showing complete illustrations of animate beings (by removing the face and separating the head from the body) is a clear differentiator from other children's animations.

Unlike other animations with main characters in various stories, such as Luffy in One Piece, Tanjiro in Kimetsu no Yaiba, Upin and Ipin, and others, Yufid Kids' animation does not have a main character at the story's center. The characters used in the animated stories also vary, depending on what is being taught, whether it is about recognizing the Hijaiyah letters, daily prayers, or others.

The various videos aired by the Yufid Kids channel can be divided into 10 different categories, namely 1) recognizing animals in the Quran (3 videos), 2) recognizing vocabulary (15 videos), 3) Ubay's story (10), 4) nursery rhymes (3 videos), 5) learning the letters of the alphabet (24), 6) getting used to thayyibah

sentences (2 videos), 7) recognizing numbers (2 videos), 8) learning daily prayers (8 videos), 9) hijaiyah letters (8 videos), 10) Yufid Kids others (5 videos).

2.5.3 Nussa: When Islamic Animation became popular in Indonesia

Nussa is an animated series produced by The Little Giantz, one of the leading animation studios in Indonesia. The animation was aired for the first time on the Nussa Official Youtube channel on 20 November 2018. Two years after airing on Youtube, Nussa animation released a digital application named "Nussa & Friends". In the same year, The Little Giantz and Visinema had prepared a project to make a wide-layer film of Nussa animation, but the Covid-19 pandemic at that time became an obstacle. Until 14 October 2021, the film Nussa was successfully screened in all Indonesian cinemas, and on 25 December 2021, it was also screened digitally in Online Cinemas.

The Little Giantz was founded by Aditya Triantoro and several of his colleagues. The studio house is located at Jl. M.P.R X No.12 Kav A, 12430 Cilandak South Jakarta. At that time, Aditya was the Chief Executive Officer, Yuda Wirfianto was the Chief Financial Officer, Bony Wirasmono was the Chief Creative Officer, and Ricky Manoppo was the Chief Operating Officer. They are professionals in their respective fields. Aditya was rooted at One Animation Pte. Ltd. for seven years. Yuda has corporate legal experience in state-owned and foreign mining companies. Then Bony was at One Animation with Aditya for three years, while Ricky had a career as an accountant and worked in an oil company.

The naming of The Little Giantz came from Aditya Triantoro's idea. The word "Giantz" symbolizes the potential of Indonesia as a great nation, while the word "Little" symbolizes the studio that Aditya and some of his colleagues founded as something minor. Aditya explains the vision of The Little Giantz with "small team big dream," which means a small studio with big dreams to contribute to building a big Indonesian nation.

Nussa animation was created to develop Indonesia's animation industry that targets the Muslim family market segment. According to Aditya, animation with Islamic content (Islamic animation) has yet to be done much, while the market

segment in Indonesia that can be entered by Islamic animation is vast. Therefore, he believes that animation with Islamic content that is produced with good quality will get a positive response from the Indonesian Muslim-majority community.

Education and Entertainment is the approach Aditya and his team chose to be used in Nussa animation. Through this approach, Islamic educational content will be packaged with a storyline that is easy and light to understand. Children are expected to be entertained while gaining knowledge. Nussa animation also describes itself as "A New Islamic Edutainment Animated Web Series for the Family" on its YouTube channel.

Nussa animation is based on the story of Nussa's daily life. He is a 9-year-old Muslim boy with his 5-year-old sister Rara, a mother called Umma, and a cat named Anta. Each episode of Nussa always starts with a daily problem Nussa and Rara face. These situations or problems will be solved with advice based on Islamic values derived from the Quran and hadith. Over time, The Little Giantz team also developed Nussa's story by adding several new characters, such as Syifa and Abdul, two of Nussa's best friends who appeared in session 2.

Nussa is the title of the animated series and its main character. Like many children his age, Nussa is sometimes irritable and feels great about himself. He is also described as a child who is devoted to his mother, desires to memorize the Quran, and has a high curiosity, so he aspires to become an astronaut. The character is also described as a child with much religious knowledge, so it is not uncommon for him to solve the problems faced. Therefore, the character of Nussa becomes a role model for his younger sister and his friends. Although Nussa is the main character in this animation, he is portrayed as a person with a disability. Nussa was born with an imperfect leg, so to be able to move, Nussa uses an artificial leg on his left leg.

Before producing Nussa's animation, several things drove Aditya to establish The Little Giantz studio house. He saw the great potential of Indonesian animators working in animation studios abroad. Some of them even occupy essential and strategic positions in animation production. In addition, he felt bored with his work. There was an unfilled hole in the success he had achieved. He went on a self-

discovery until he finally found his way and returned to Indonesia to establish his animation studio and produce domestic animation. The emptiness felt by Aditya was also felt by some of his colleagues who could be considered successful in their respective careers. They began looking for "something" material to fill the spiritual void. Starting from self-learning through videos on Youtube, they found and participated in intensive recitation communities. Yuk Ngaji is one such community.

Nussa animation was born to broadcast religious teachings, although it was not the first Islamic content produced by The Little Giantz. Since its release, Nussa animation has received a lot of positive responses from the audience. The animation is considered by many as an animation with excellent quality. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Nussa animation won the 2019 Indonesian Film Festival Citra Cup in the Best Short Animated Film category.

The success of Nussa animation is not only based on the excellent quality of animation and the Islamic genre that is unique to it but also supported by frequent promotions, both through social media and television media. Several celebrities, such as Felix Siauw and Mario Irawansyah, were also collaborated by The Little Giantz to expand the reach of Nussa animation and gain as much audience as possible in the Muslim family market segment.

CHAPTER III

INDONESIAN ISLAMIC ANIMATION: DA'WA, ENTERTAINING ISLAM, AND COMMODIFICATION

3.1 Riko The Series, and the Hijrah Artist Movement in Creative Industry

3.1.1 Riko The Series: an Overview

Riko The Series is a children's animation series produced by Garis Sepuluh, a corporation initiated by Teuku Wisnu, Arie Kuncoro Untung, and Yuda Wirafianto.⁸⁶ The animated series is presented with the concept of entertaining but still providing education (edutainment). In the series, science, which is often associated with the values of the Quran, is the core that distinguishes it from other children's animations.⁸⁷

The origin of the animated series production was Teuku Wisnu's concern about the development of his children, who have been introduced to gadgets. He also thought about how children who are familiar with gadgets should not only use them as a tool to play but also as a means to learn, recite and explore new things so that they can grow and develop properly. Then, he collaborated with Arie Kuncoro Untung and Yuda Wirafianto to produce Riko The Series animation. Teuku Wisnu did not deny that he was also inspired by his son's show, the animation Nussa.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ "Founder of Garis Sepuluh," accessed June 7, 2023, <https://garissepuluh.com/bio/>. Teuku Wisnu is an artist who started his career as an advertising star. The public recognized the Acehnese man after playing Farel in the soap opera "Cinta Fitri." Not only a soap opera artist, Wisnu is also a businessman and religious program host. He received several awards during his career, including the Panasonic Global Award 2009 (favorite actor category) and 2015 (religious host category). Meanwhile, Arie Kuncoro Untung is a figure who is widely recognized by the public because he has been in the creative industry for more than 20 years. His career is diverse, ranging from television program presenter, soap opera star, movie star, and advertising model to film producer. "3 (Alif Lam Mim)" is one of his best movies as a producer. Arie Untung was also awarded the Moslem Choice Award for his contribution to driving the Islamic economy, especially in the media sector. Both are known as hijrah artists because they are in the same Islamic study circle, the Kajian Musawarah.

⁸⁷ "Riko The Series."

⁸⁸ "Terinspirasi Tontonan Anak, Teuku Wisnu Buat Animasi Riko The Series," kumparan, accessed June 7, 2023, <https://kumparan.com/kumparanhits/terinspirasi-tontonan-anak-teuku-wisnu-buat-animasi-riko-the-series-1soOVQ9TZEV>.



Figure 3.1: The Founders of Garis Sepuluh
source: Garis Sepuluh's Instagram Post

Riko The Series has joined the Youtube platform since November 9, 2019. The first video on the channel was titled "Teaser Riko The Series - Animasi Indonesia," which was uploaded on November 16, 2019. The teaser video attracted millions of viewers and received positive responses through the comments column, which reached hundreds. Most commentators expressed their pride in the work of Indonesian animators today, and some even compared it to animations made in Malaysia. In addition, not a few also aligned the animation of Riko The Series with the animation of Nussa, which had aired and was known first.⁸⁹ The YouTube channel has 2.12 million subscribers and uploaded 232 videos with 515,487,532 views.⁹⁰

Entering its fourth year, Riko The Series has successfully aired three seasons, of which in the first season, there were 26 episodes; in the second season, there were 21 episodes; and in the third season, which is currently running, there are 15 episodes that have been aired. In each season, Riko The Series not only shows unique and interactive stories in the daily life of Riko and his family, but there are also several episodes of children's songs, including "Lagu Anak Islami - Ayo Sholat" in season 1⁹¹ and "Lagu Anak Islami - Ilmuwan Hebat" in season 2.⁹² In

⁸⁹ *Teaser Riko The Series - Animasi Indonesia*, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEUu5bQJXnM>.

⁹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/@RikoTheSeries/about> accessed May 27, 2023.

⁹¹ *Lagu Anak Islami - Ayo Sholat | Riko The Series*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETj-A4A3dPQ>.

⁹² *Lagu Anak Islami - ILMUWAN HEBAT - Riko The Series Season 02 - Episode 13*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFHnJwJQLcg>.

contrast, in season 3, until now, no children's song videos have been aired on the Riko the Series channel.

Riko The Series is aired on Youtube and other video streaming platforms such as Vidio⁹³ and Muslimkidstv,⁹⁴ and national television channels such as Transtv.⁹⁵ The animated series has been considered worthy of competing with other children's animations and has a wide enough scope among the audience.

Table 3.1: Session 1 of Riko The Series

No	Episode	Title	Uploaded	Like	View	Comments
1	Episode 1	Dare to Face the Steel?!	9 Feb 2020	33k	4.922.371	no
2	Episode 2	Latest Islamic Children's Song - Who Created?	15 Feb 2020	25k	6.386.996	no
3	Episode 3	I Want to Fly	22 Feb 2020	15k	3.386.705	no
4	Episode 4	My Car Speeds Up	29 Feb 2020	23k	6.004.381	no
5	Episode 5	The Power of Milk	7 March 2020	10k	2.333.285	no
6	Episode 6	Playing with Water	13 March 2020	16k	4.327.540	no
7	Episode 7	Fighting Viruses with Honey	20 March 2020	14k	3.110.148	no
8	Episode 8	It's Better to Forgive	27 March 2020	17k	3.978.414	no
9	Episode 9	Protector of the Earth	3 April 2020	9,6k	2.411.385	no

⁹³ "Nonton Riko The Series Terlengkap," Vidio, accessed June 7, 2023, <https://www.vidio.com/tags/riko-the-series>.

⁹⁴ "MuslimKids.TV," accessed June 7, 2023, <https://muslimkids.tv/mobile/ID/>.

⁹⁵ "Riko The Series Tayang Di Trans Tv," accessed June 7, 2023, <https://www.transtv.co.id/corporate/press-release/142/riko-the-series-tayang-di-trans-tv->.

10	Episode 10	Understanding <i>Isra Mi'raj</i>	11 April 2020	19k	4.829.174	no
11	Episode 11	The Distance between the Sun and Earth	17 April 2020	9,9k	2.130.463	no
12	Episode 12	The Virtue of Fasting	24 April 2020	22k	4.546.826	no
13	Episode 13	Islamic Children's Song - Let's Pray	1 May 2020	26k	9.698.645	no
14	Episode 14	Inventor of the Mechanical Clock	8 May 2020	11k	2.336.457	no
15	Episode 15	Like a Chameleon	15 May 2020	23k	4.268.617	no
16	Episode 16	My Father, My Hero	23 May 2020	30k	5.132.336	no
17	Episode 17	Don't Get Angry	5 June 2020	27k	4.124.826	913
18	Episode 18	Let's Grow Up!	19 June 2020	83k	22.383.791	no
19	Episode 19	Islamic Children's Song - Getting to Know the Arabic Alphabet	26 June 2020	73k	20.450.023	no
20	Episode 20	Plants in Praise	3 July 2020	20k	4.268.890	1,4k
21	Episode 21	Let's Save Electricity	10 July 2020	13k	1.962.245	no
22	Episode 22	Playing Detective	17 July 2020	11k	1.983.292	no

23	Episode 23	Inventor of the Number Zero.	24 July 2020	12k	1.849.345	no
24	Episode 24	Riko's White Goat	31 July 2020	32k	6.585.924	988
25	Episode 25	Heroes Within Our Bodies	7 August 2020	18k	2.976.077	no
26	Episode 26	Commemorating Indonesian Independence	14 August 2020	19k	3.718.243	no

Table 3.2: Session 2 of Riko The Series

No	Episode	Title	Uploaded	Like	View	Comments
1	Episode 1	Don't Be Afraid of the Dark	11 Sep 2020	74k	12.941.135	no
2	Episode 2	I love Mom	25 Sep 2020	125k	29.002.782	no
3	Episode 3	Latest Children's Song: Journey to Space	9 Oct 2020	174k	27.275.897	no
4	Episode 4	Help	16 Oct 2020	22k	4.937.081	no
5	Episode 5	Astaghfirullah, I forgot!	30 Oct 2020	20k	4.362.230	1,3k
6	Episode 6	Flying Kites	13 Nov 2020	15k	3.657.909	732
7	Episode 7	Never Give Up	27 Nov 2020	25k	4.768.807	1,1k
8	Episode 8	Online Schooling	11 Dec 2020	25k	3.270.653	1,7k

9	Episode 9	Brave Enough for Circumcision	25 Dec 2020	63k	8.297.911	no
10	Episode 10	Rain	8 Jan 2021	30k	6.058.051	no
11	Episode 11	My Best Friend	22 Jan 2021	118k	15.582.790	no
12	Episode 12	Beautiful Morning	5 Feb 2021	18k	3.753.806	no
13	Episode 13	Islamic Children's Song - Brilliant Scientist	19 Feb 2021	38k	7.731.433	no
14	Episode 14	Eating Too Many Candies	5 March 2021	49k	10.749.458	no
15	Episode 15	Etiquette Before Knowledge	2 April 2021	11k	1.954.374	no
16	Episode 16	The Best from Mom	16 Apr 2021	12k	2.242.882	no
17	Episode 17	Plastic Waste	25 June 2021	13k	2.506.999	no
18	Episode 18	Let's Concentrate.	30 July 2021	9,3k	1.634.777	no
19	Episode 19	Why Did You Move?	10 Sep 21	15k	2.043.855	no
20	Episode 20	Let's Eat Vegetables	12 Dec 2021	5,9k	2.821.916	no

21	Episode 21	Want to Go Viral	19 Dec 2021	7,3k	1.315.612	no
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Table 3.3: Session 3 of Riko The Series

No	Episode	Title	Uploaded	Like	View	Comments
1	Episode 1	Special Gift	18 March 2022	8,7k	1.936.754	no
2	Episode 2	Can I Still Fast?	15 April 2022	8k	1.400.587	no
3	Episode 3	Everyone Celebrates Eid	29 Apr 2022	4,8k	797.930	27
4	Episode 4	Balanced Nutrition is Important	20 May 2022	2,3k	1.982.279	no
5	Episode 5	Eating with the Right Hand	27 May 2022	3,4k	747.786	no
6	Episode 6	Learning from Salted Fish	24 June 2022	5,5k	1.072.650	204
7	Episode 7	Becoming an Astronaut	22 July 2022	3,9k	855.687	no
8	Episode 8	Pray Early	19 August 2022	2k	410.032	no
9	Episode 9	Let's Take a Nap	7 Oct 2022	2,8k	597.127	no
10	Episode 10	Body Odor	25 Nov 2022	2,5k	650.309	no
11	Episode 11	Brave with the Dentist	23 Dec 2022	1,9k	501.558	38
12	Episode 12	Healing	20 Jan 2023	1,4k	437.537	no
13	Episode 13	Playing at the Beach	10 Feb 2023	2,3k	515.23.00	no

14	Episode 14	Super Remote	7 Apr 2023	1,3k	211.469	no
15	Episode 15	Uninvited Guest	12 May 2023	972	140.056	no

3.1.2 Main Characters of the Animation and the Actors behind them

The main character in the animation is Riko, an 8-year-old boy who is cheerful, energetic, curious, and enthusiastic about science. He likes to go on adventures, observe and try new things, so he always has many questions about what he faces. When he has a question, the hair on his head will instantly stand up and form a question mark. Riko is shown wearing an orange t-shirt and beige three-quarter pants. The voice of the main character in the animated series is Jordan Omar, a child actor who has starred in several movies and web series on Indonesian screens.⁹⁶

In daily life, Riko is accompanied by a robot who becomes his best friend, Q110. The robot will answer any questions asked by Riko. Q110 is a robot from the past that is 1000 years old. This robot is presented to record various discoveries and various kinds of science in history. Therefore, the robot seems to know all kinds of knowledge because it can answer Riko's questions. Q110 can express its emotions and feelings using solar panels and unique hologram capabilities. In addition, its two hands can be transformed into any tool needed. Arie Kuncoro Untung, the executive producer of the animated series, is the voice actor of the robot character Q110.

In addition to the two characters above, several other characters often add color to Riko's daily stories. They are Ayah, Bunda, Kak Wulan and Jago. Ayah is described as a friendly and close figure to his children. The 43-year-old man likes to take Riko on adventures in nature. In addition, Dad is also said to like fighting sports, such as boxing and martial arts. His profession as a doctor may be one of the reasons why this character only sometimes appears in videos. The character is

⁹⁶ "Pengisi Suara Riko The Series, Simak Wajah di Balik Karakter Menggemaskan Ini!," kumparan, accessed June 7, 2023, <https://kumparan.com/seleb-update/pengisi-suara-riko-the-series-simak-wajah-di-balik-karakter-menggemaskan-ini-1wiF6pfngSB>.

dressed in a white long-sleeved shirt, gray vest, and brown pants. Teuku Wisnu is the voice actor for the character.

Bunda is the nickname for the 40-year-old mother character. She is described as soft-hearted, compassionate, and loving. Cooking is her hobby, while writing is her hobby and job. Bunda's character is shown with a black hijab and a black robe with a white outer. Dhini Aminarti fills the character's voice. Then Kak Wulan is the only older sister Riko has. The figure is very fond of Riko. Kak Wulan is described as a 15-year-old girl. Jolly and friendly is the impression that this figure displays. She also always appears in modern fashion clothes.



Figure 3.2: The Characters of Riko The Series
source: <https://rikotheseries.com/>

3.1.3 Garis Sepuluh Corporation: Creative Industry and Hijrah Artist Movement

Garis Sepuluh is a family entertainment and media company that encompasses experiences and products, media distribution, and entertainment, producing and developing content. Teuku Wisnu founded Garis Sepuluh with Arie Untung and Yuda Wirafianto in November 2019. The company aims to create Intellectual Property (IP) segmented towards children. Riko The Series is the first and only Intellectual Property that Garis Sepuluh has produced to date.⁹⁷

Three months after its establishment, Garis Sepuluh held a Grand Launching and the premiere of Riko The Series, attended by Anis Baswedan, Sandiaga Uno, and several Indonesian artists. In addition, Garis Sepuluh also held auditions to select voice actors for the character Riko in the Riko The Series animation. At least

⁹⁷ "Garis Sepuluh Corporation – Garis Sepuluh Corporation," accessed August 18, 2023, <https://garissepuluh.com/>.

400 children participated in the audition. The high enthusiasm of the Muslim community at that time encouraged Trans TV and Rajawali TV to propose Riko The Series to be aired on the two television stations.

Teuku Wisnu explained that what was behind the production of Riko The Series animation was the problem of the crisis of educational content that children in Indonesia can consume. This problem must undoubtedly be found a solution. Muslim families need educational and entertaining shows for their children, so Garis Sepuluh provides what is needed, namely Riko The Series, an animation that is entertaining and has educational values.

According to him, content that presents good values tends to be less attractive to the audience, so the Riko The Series animation worked on by Garis Sepuluh will be made as attractive as possible, both from the quality of the animation, the characters, and the storyline. Teuku Wisnu gave an example of how old animations like Doraemon still stick in the audience's memory. Therefore, in Riko The Series animation, Riko's character will be accompanied by a robot named Q110 to color the storyline and attract children to watch it.⁹⁸

In developing Riko The Series animation, Teuku Wisnu realized that listening to feedback from the audience, which in this case are the customers, is essential. At that time, after several episodes of Riko The Series had aired, Wisnu revealed that he received feedback from his audience, who considered the nickname "Aku" to be impolite. Although, according to Wisnu, not all people have this view, he realized that the nickname "Aku" does tend to be impolite for some people in Indonesia. Therefore, the production team responded to the feedback and changed the nickname "Aku" into the character's name.⁹⁹

Teuku Wisnu, the founder of Garis Sepuluh, admitted that he was fully involved from the beginning of the conceptualization of Riko The Series to its launch. Since the originality offered by Riko, The Series is Qur'anic Sciences, the involvement of Ustaz to review the Islamic values and the involvement of

⁹⁸ *Teuku Wisnu Artis Sinetron Jadi CMO Garis Sepuluh*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se7BWXTGqDA>.

⁹⁹ *Teuku Wisnu Artis Sinetron Jadi CMO Garis Sepuluh*.

researchers from Salman ITB to review the scientific aspects are necessary. According to Wisnu, since Riko The Series does not only entertain but also educates, there must be arguments (dalil) in content creation.

The production process of one 5-7 minute episode of Riko The Series takes 3 months and is done by at least 30-50 people. Most of the Riko The Series animation production team comes from Malang. In fact, according to Wisnu, the animation production is done in Malang, while the office in Jakarta is used for Voice Over and focuses on marketing and cooperation. He explains that the fundamental reason he works with animators in Malang is cost management. The difference in minimum wage between Malang and Jakarta helped Garis Sepuluh manage and reduce the cost of animation production, which is costly.

There are two challenges faced by Garis Sepuluh in producing Riko The Series. The first is the cash flow, which must be managed well because the investment funds needed in the creative industry are enormous. Therefore, the income earned from ad views on the Youtube channel must be supported by several other things, such as sponsorship, merchandise, and others. The second is animation distribution. Although Riko The Series animation is aired through the Youtube channel, Wisnu realizes that some areas still have difficulty accessing the internet. Hence, cooperation with private television stations is one of the solutions.

Teuku Wisnu explained that the same frequency among the team and the same spirit of building Riko The Series animation to provide positive and valuable shows are the main reasons for consistent movement. He said that when the covid-19 pandemic hit, and of course, the animation industry was also affected by it, he once cut the salaries of several teams, including Bimo Ananto, who is currently the Executive Producer at Riko the Series. Without the same frequency and vision, of course, this will make it shaky, but the fact is that the Riko The Series team can survive.¹⁰⁰

Over time, Riko The Series animation has become an animated product accepted by many parties. The branding of Riko's character has attracted children

¹⁰⁰ *Teuku Wisnu Artis Sinetron Jadi CMO Garis Sepuluh.*

to watch and several parties to collaborate, from private companies to state-owned enterprises. In its official duration, Riko The Series has collaborated with several agencies, such as DKI Jakarta Regional Government, BNPB (National Disaster Management Agency), Ministry of Education and Culture, BSSN (National Cyber Sandi Agency), and Sunat123. As for partnership, Riko The Series has three types of partnership, namely licensing partnership, sponsorship partnership, and TV & Broadcast partnership.

Garis Sepuluh's dream is to become the Indonesian version of Disney by consistently presenting positive educational content for children to have good morals. What motivates him to do this is the prophet Muhammad's hadith, which states, "The best of human beings are those who are beneficial to others". One of the things that can be done to be the best human being by providing benefits is working in the animation industry.

3.2 Ibra Berkisah: Integrating Music and *Sirah Nabawiyah* (Prophetic Biography)

3.2.1 Ibra Berkisah: an Overview

Ibra Berkisah is an animated series produced by Manara Studios. This animation joined YouTube on 14th December 2021. The first episode of Ibra Berkisah was aired on 3rd July 2022, marking the birth date of the Ibra Berkisah animation. At just one year old, the Ibra Berkisah animation has already managed to produce and broadcast one season consisting of 28 episodes. Until now, the videos uploaded on YouTube for Ibra Berkisah have garnered 9,009,356 views. *Manara Studios* is a studio house in Kemang, South Jakarta, focusing on developing Muslim content and entertainment.¹⁰¹

Ibra Berkisah is the first intellectual property produced and owned by Manara Studios. On its YouTube page, Ibra Berkisah presents itself as a new Islamic animated series content that revolves around *Sirah Nabawiyah* (the life story of Prophet Muhammad) and is presented attractively through Broadway musicals

¹⁰¹ "Ibra Berkisah - YouTube," accessed June 16, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/@IbraBerkisah/about>.

suitable for the whole family. Three unique aspects set Ibra Berkisah apart from other Islamic animations. Firstly, it focuses primarily on the theme of *Sirah Nabawiyah*. Secondly, it incorporates musical drama, using music in the videos to captivate viewers and listeners. Moreover, finally, the backdrop of this animation is a boarding school (*pesantren*), distinguishing it from other Islamic animations that typically revolve around a home setting.

Table 3.4: Session 1 of Ibra Berkisah

No.	Episode	Title	Uploaded	Like	View	Comments
1	Episode 1	Splitting the Moon	3 July 2022	9,6k	410.775	593
2	Episode 2	<i>Amanah</i> (Trustworthines)	14 July 2022	8,1k	535.819	315
3	Episode 3	Jabir's Food	24 July 2022	17k	913.879	403
4	Episode 4	Turning Wood into a Sword	7 August 2022	5,3k	370.954	187
5	Episode 5	Buraq	21 August 2022	4,5k	299.543	173
6	Episode 6	Superhero	4 Sep 2022	4,3k	290.183	234
7	Episode 7	Wrestling Rukanah	11 Sep 2022	4,5k	338.306	195
8	Episode 8	Stung by Bees	25 Sep 2022	4k	293.363	185
9	Episode 9	Praying for Rain	9 Oct 2022	4,4k	304.197	281
10	Episode 10	F.O.M.O. (Fear of Missing Out)	23 Oct 2022	4,3k	288.309	313
11	Episode 11	The Gentleness of Prophet	30 Oct 2022	3,2k	185.819	212

		Muhammad in Thaif				
12	Episode 12	FLEXING	06 Nov 22	5k	324.180	508
13	Episode 13	Islam is Clean (Part 1)	4 Dec 2022	2,3k	173.362	138
14	Episode 13	Islam is Clean (Part 2)	11 Dec 2022	2k	138.258	129
15	Episode 14	Queueing is Islam (Part 1)	19 Dec 2022	2,3k	144.910	79
16	Episode 14	Queueing is Islam (Part 2)	25 Dec 2022	2,2k	134.268	118
17	Episode 15	LA TAHZAN	1 Jan 2023	2,9k	161.744	170
18	Episode 16	Being Gentle with Animals	22 Jan 2023	2k	141.017	128
19	Episode 17	Bully	12 Feb 2023	2,8k	160.689	130
20	Episode 18	Gondhez the Champion	19 Feb 2023	2,8k	194.892	111
21	Episode 19	<i>Su'udzon</i>	5 March 2023	2,1k	116.542	159
22	Episode 20	Horror	19 March 2023	2,2k	124.256	147
23	Episode 21	Muslims, Don't Be Weak	2 Apr 2023	1,4k	73.041	106

24	Episode 22	Hoho's Birthday	9 Apr 2023	1,7k	83.725	112
25	Episode 23	<i>Ikoy - ikoyan</i> Eid al-Fitr	23 Apr 2023	1,4k	62.712	79
26	Episode 24	Beautiful <i>Adzan</i>	14 May 2023	1,2k	59.306	70
27	Episode 25	Miracle of Water	21 May 2023	875	40.396	67
28	Episode 26	Ghosting	4 June 2023	900	33.696	65
29	Episode 27	Self Healing	11 June 2023	756	27.387	71

3.2.2 Main Characters of the Animation and the Actors behind them

The main character in the animation Ibra Berkisah is Ibra, a nickname for Ibrahim. He is a teenage boy who studies and lives in a boarding school. Ibra is portrayed as a smart, calm, patient, kind, and friendly santri (student in a pesantren). He always appears as a problem solver or mediator in conflicts that arise among other characters in the Ibra Berkisah animation. The voice actor for the main character in this animated series is Ali Fikry, a child actor who has played several roles in Indonesian films.

In his daily activities at the pesantren, Ibra has a roommate from Jakarta named Hoho. The character of Hoho is voiced by Bimasena and is known for being stubborn, arrogant, slang, and modern. Although Hoho is also a student at the boarding school, he does not wear the typical student attire and continues to wear his urban clothes. This character is the focal point of problems and conflicts in the story.

Another santri character is Tokek, voiced by Dwi Sasono. Tokek is depicted as a simple, conservative, and not very clever santri. However, Tokek is also known

for his sincerity, although he is portrayed as easily influenced or following Hoho's behavior in some episodes.¹⁰²

The last character in the Ibra Berkisah animation is Pak Kyai, portrayed by Surya Saputra, an Indonesian actor admired by many mothers due to his appearances in Indonesian soap operas. In Indonesian culture, "Kyai" was originally used to refer to something sacred or revered.¹⁰³ However, the term is now more commonly used as a nickname for religious leaders who oversee Islamic boarding schools. Pak Kyai is depicted as an older man with a wise, charismatic, and serene demeanor. He serves as a teacher, imparting Islamic teachings to the students at the pesantren.¹⁰⁴



Figure 3.3: The Characters of Ibra Berkisah
source: *Ibra Berkisah's Instagram Post*

3.2.3 When *Sirah Nabawiyah* is Musicalized

As mentioned, the Ibra Berkisah animation possesses three unique qualities that distinguish it from other Islamic animations. In addition to its setting in a pesantren (Islamic boarding school), the incorporation of *Sirah Nabawiyah* as the main theme and the use of musical elements are two other distinct features of the animation. The selection of *Sirah Nabawiyah* as the central theme for Ibra Berkisah is based

¹⁰² BeritaSatu.com, "Surya Saputra dan Dwi Sasono Bangga Isi Suara Serial Ibra," *beritasatu.com*, accessed August 18, 2023, <https://www.beritasatu.com/lifestyle/947263/surya-saputra-dan-dwi-sasono-bangga-isi-suara-serial-ibra>.

¹⁰³ Ahmad Syafi'i Noer, "Pesantren: Asal Usul Dan Pertumbuhan Kelembagaan," in *Sejarah Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan Lembaga-Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Grasindo, n.d.).

¹⁰⁴ BeritaSatu.com, "Surya Saputra dan Dwi Sasono Bangga Isi Suara Serial Ibra."

on several factors: First. At the same time, many Islamic animations focus on teaching the Qur'an and Hadith; the significance of Sirah Nabawiyah is often overlooked and underrepresented in conveying its teachings to Muslim families in Indonesia. Secondly, Muslims currently need positive role models, and Sirah Nabawiyah provides a rich source of exemplary figures. Thirdly, Sirah Nabawiyah is an essential field of study that complements the Qur'an and Hadith, as it is intricately linked to the context and understanding of these sources.¹⁰⁵

Ibra Berkisah animation is the first Islamic animation to incorporate musical drama from its inception. While some other Islamic animations may include Islamic children's songs, even the Yufid Kids animation affiliated with Salafi groups in Yogyakarta features videos on the names of Hijri months and Hijaiyah letters. According to Pandu, the producer of Ibra Berkisah, including music in the animation was a deliberate choice backed by thorough research. He stated:

"From our research, now that we have ventured into the digital world, it turns out that the most consumed is music, songs. So, it (using music) was part of the strategy. Even though some initially have not noticed Ibra and have not watched the whole series, but hopefully through the songs that are spread across social media platforms, hopefully, it will lead them to watch it because the fact is that in the field, we also managed to create engagement that way. It turns out that some know the songs first, only to find out that Ibra has a whole series. So, yes, so far, it is pretty on target anyway."¹⁰⁶

The team found that music videos consistently garnered high viewership on YouTube, thus opting to utilize music to reach a broader audience. Pandu further mentioned that some viewers were initially introduced to Ibra Berkisah through the music they had heard. In fact, during a podcast episode aired by Ibra Berkisah, Harry Budiman, the songwriter and music arranger for the animation, expressed his aspirations to create a musical film for Ibra Berkisah, drawing inspiration from Disney's musical productions.

¹⁰⁵ PT AKURAT SENTRA MEDIA, "Serial Animasi Ibra, Kisahkan Sirah Nabawiyah Secara Menarik untuk Anak," July 4, 2022, <https://akurat.co/serial-animasi-ibra-kisahkan-sirah-nabawiyah-secara-menarik-untuk-anak>.

¹⁰⁶ Pandu Adiputra, Produser Ibra Berkisah, Google Meet, July 11, 2023.

3.3 Islam Propagated by Indonesian Islamic Animation

Quoting Weng, Meyer, and Moors argue that religious processes always involve media mediation, making it crucial to explore the transition from one form of media mediation to another, which includes the adoption of new mass media technologies and the reconfiguration of specific religious practices.¹⁰⁷ New media platforms like television and the internet and the reutilization of traditional media, such as printed publications and cassettes, have expanded the Islamic public sphere, providing spaces for ideas, identity, and discourse. Furthermore, the rise of social media has allowed Muslims from diverse backgrounds to express their views without editorial intervention or censorship freely.¹⁰⁸

In the current Indonesian context, becoming popular as a preacher requires not only knowledge and substance but also effective communication skills and media strategies, which have become integral parts of the growing Islamic preaching sector. Various media platforms shape and are influenced by diverse Muslim discourses, practices, and figures. While television and radio were previously instrumental in the emergence of celebrity preachers like Aa Gym, social media platforms such as Instagram, Youtube, and TikTok now provide alternative avenues for achieving popularity.

Many popular preachers possess media literacy and may have appealing appearances or captivating voices, even without strong religious education credentials. Social media platforms offer a cost-effective means for these preachers to increase their visibility and reach wider audiences. Unlike radio and television stations that may restrict preachers with controversial views, social media allows them to disseminate their ideas online freely. Consequently, religious leaders not only adapt their proselytization strategies to new media but also utilize these platforms to achieve their own goals.

¹⁰⁷ Wai Weng Hew, "THE ART OF DAKWAH: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siau," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 61–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416757>.

¹⁰⁸ D.F. Eickelman and J.W. Anderson, "Redefining Muslim Publics," in *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, n.d.), 1–18.

Birgit Meyer emphasizes the significance of sensation and aesthetics within strong and competing politico-religious contexts. She argues that sensational forms and aesthetics of persuasion should not be dismissed or considered inferior to rational thinking and mobilization; instead, they should be regarded as central in shaping personal and collective modes of being and belonging.¹⁰⁹

The relaxation of media policies following the fall of the New Order regime and the emergence of private television stations have contributed to the rise of celebrity preachers such as Aa Gym.¹¹⁰ Moreover, increased internet access and the popularity of social media have played a significant role in empowering individuals proficient in digital technology, like Felix Siauw, to strengthen their presence. This opportunity extends not only to those with strong verbal communication skills, attractive appearances, and pleasant voices but also to those possessing digital skills such as audio and video editing and animation creation, which do not necessarily require them to perform physically.

In the case of animation, animators are not required to present themselves physically to convey Islamic da'wa messages. Instead, they visualize these messages through shared animations. Therefore, the medium itself is as important as the message. In *Riko The Series*, Islam is propagated through storytelling and visual displays. The episode "AKU SAYANG BUNDA" (I Love Mom) received high viewership after Juz 30 children's *murottal* videos. In the video, the figure of Mother is told to always be responsive to help her son even though he is sick. But on the contrary, when Mother needed Riko's help, Riko did not immediately go to her and delayed it because he was so busy playing basketball that he forgot. Then, when kak Wulan returned home, she found Ibu helpless and had to be taken to the hospital.

At the hospital, kak Wulan and Riko cried incessantly and felt guilty, but Ibu never blamed them. The father figure, who is a doctor at the hospital, advised Riko

¹⁰⁹ Birgit Meyer, "Aesthetics of Persuasion: Global Christianity and Pentecostalism's Sensational Forms," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 741–63, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2010-015>.

¹¹⁰ James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Stanford University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804796385>.

and Wulan by quoting a hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Mas'ud which states that the best deed in the sight of Allah after praying in time is filial piety to parents. The father figure also explained the reason why filial piety to parents is the best charity. According to him, this is because Allah wants children to be able to repay the favour and kindness of parents who have cared for them from infancy to adulthood. The story ends with Riko's apology and her promise to no longer ignore her parents' call or delay it.

Another method of propagating Islam is through the musicalization of the Prophetic Code. Not all videos incorporate music in the Ibra Berkisah animation, but specifically, the Ibra animation adopts the musicalization approach to portray the *sirah nabawiyah*. Episode 1 of Ibra Berkisah, titled "Membelah Bulan" (Splitting the Moon) ranks among the top five most-viewed videos in the series. In this episode, the event of the Prophet splitting the moon in Islamic history is depicted through musicalization. This approach has garnered a positive response from the audience. One of the comments, from @firmanalamin7495, expresses enthusiasm, stating, *"Very cool! It's a great way to introduce Islamic history and values in a fun and contemporary manner. Can't wait for episode 2!"*

Visual displays play a significant role in propagating Islam within the animation. For instance, calligraphy displays with the phrase *"Inna Allaha Kana bikum Rahimaa"* (Surely Allah is ever Merciful to you) are prominently featured in the living room settings throughout Riko The Series. When asked about the specific choice of displaying verse 29 of Surah An-Nisa, the producer, Bimo Ananto, stated that it was a creative decision made by the animators of Riko The Series, as long as it aligns with the teachings of Islam.

By appropriately and creatively visualizing the message of Islam through animated videos, untapped audiences, such as Muslim children and teenagers, can be reached. Social media and animated da'wa empower young Muslims without formal religious education to actively engage in da'wa activities. Today, anyone with digital skills and effective communication strategies can become a da'wa advocate. Visual communication and marketing skills, alongside religious knowledge, play a pivotal role in this form of da'wa.

3.4 Negotiating Da'wa and Religious Commodification

Indonesian Islamic animation disseminates Islamic teachings and values to its primarily Muslim audience, particularly within the family segment. These animations employ captivating storytelling techniques and visually appealing visuals to promote Islam, its teachings, and its values. However, the commercial nature of the creative industry often results in the commodification of Islam. Production studios and animation creators recognize the potential market for Islamic animation in a predominantly Muslim country. Various Islamic animations are marketed as products, and profit becomes the driving force behind their production and the dissemination of Islamic teachings.

According to the producers and marketing teams of two Indonesian Islamic animations, *Riko The Series* and *Ibra Berkisah*, the revenue generated from YouTube advertisements does not outweigh the cost of producing animated videos that typically last no more than 10 minutes for *Riko The Series* and 20 minutes for *Ibra Berkisah*. To sustain their presence in the creative industry, which is not inexpensive, production studios employ various strategies such as sponsored content, licensing, merchandising, and collaborations with government and private agencies. *Riko The Series* has been around for three years and has successfully implemented these strategies. *Riko The Series* outlines three types of collaborations with external parties on its website: licensing, sponsorship, and partnerships with TV and broadcast networks.

Balancing da'wa (preaching) and commodification is a challenge that animation production teams must confront. These teams navigate complex negotiations to ensure that Islamic messages remain authentic and impactful while catering to market preferences and financial considerations. They strive to find a middle ground where religious content is safeguarded and not overly commercialized.

One approach to achieving this balance is to review da'wa content by scholars, thereby ensuring that the elements of Islamic da'wa and commercial boundaries are maintained. In the animation *Ibra Berkisah*, Ustaz Khidir Lc.MA

and Ustaz Ilham Martasya'bana reviewed the religious aspects of the animation content.¹¹¹ In the case of Riko The Series, the producer did not mention the name of a specific scholar. However, it was stated that they consulted with scholars to prevent any potential negative consequences of the animation. Ustaz Adi Hidayat, a popular preacher from Muhammadiyah, reportedly visited the studio of Riko The Series because his children enjoyed watching the animation. It was observed that the Instagram account of Garis Sepuluh, the company behind Riko The Series, had posted a short video clip of Ustaz Oemar Mita's lecture. However, this does not confirm that Ustaz Oemar Mita reviewed the da'wa content. While Ustaz Oemar Mita, associated with the Salafi movement, participated in the Shahabiyat study organized by Shireen Sungkar, the wife of Teuku Wisnu (founder of Garis Sepuluh Corporation), the specific involvement in content review remains uncertain.

Collaborating with religious organizations and like-minded institutions or seeking funding from philanthropic sources is another approach to navigating the negotiation between da'wa and the market. This approach helps alleviate the pressure to prioritize profitability and allows the da'wa message to take precedence. By securing adequate funding and resources through non-commercial means, animation creators can maintain artistic and creative control over their projects, ensuring that religious content remains at the forefront. Riko The Series has made such efforts.

Based on Abdul Rosyid's explanation, the team behind Riko The Series has never felt compelled to compromise their identity as an animated show with entertainment and educational value during collaborations. While requests from collaborators exist, they do not require Riko The Series to abandon its identity. Abdul Rosyid recounted an instance when a sponsor requested that the Islamic elements or references to the Quran be more subtle, but this did not pose a problem for the production team as long as the idea and message remained good and aligned with the teachings of the Quran. Although Riko The Series emphasizes the connection between science and the Quran as its unique selling point, not all

¹¹¹ Adiputra, Produser Ibra Berkisah; Urwatul Wutsqo, Pemasaran & Bisnis Komersial Ibra Berkisah, Google Meet, July 6, 2023.

produced and broadcasted videos feature science-related Quranic verses. While the elements of Islam and the Quran are pronounced in Session 1, subsequent sessions have less obvious Islamic or Quranic references, with some episodes not mentioning the Quran.¹¹²

Furthermore, Indonesian Islamic animation is also shifting towards a more modern movement and is thicker with Indonesian values or suitability to the Indonesian context. It can be seen from the emergence of Yufid Kids animation to Ibra Berkisah lately. Yufid Kids, an Indonesian Islamic animation that first aired its video through the YouTube platform, is quite thick with Salafi values where it is affiliated with, such as the appearance of all human characters that are shown without faces and the separation between head and body. Then, what has been shown in Yufid Kids is not adopted by Nussa because it will certainly not attract children to watch it. However, in Nussa animation, the character is still visualized with religious attributes in her daily activities, which is not typical for children in Indonesia. Using robes for Nussa caused controversy and rejection from some Indonesians who thought that Nussa animation had promoted Taliban Islam to Indonesian children.¹¹³

The controversy that caused the public rejection of Nussa animation may have been considered by the animation production team of Riko The Series, which appeared after Nussa animation. Riko, the animation's main character, is shown as a typical Indonesian child. In his daily activities, Riko is shown wearing a bright t-shirt and shorts instead of a skullcap or robe. Learning from the Nussa animation, the Riko animation features Islam, which is clear to avoid counterproductive responses from the Indonesian people. Bimo Ananto, the producer of Riko The Series, stated it:

“We try to make the stories we make can be said to have Islamic values for children. We think it is OK; we are in Indonesia, and the majority

¹¹² Adiputra, Produser Ibra Berkisah; Urwatul Wutsqo, Pemasaran & Bisnis Komersial Ibra Berkisah, Google Meet, July 6, 2023.

¹¹³ Istiqomatul Hayati, “Film Nussa Disebut Kampanyekan Taliban, Ini Balasan Keren Angga Sasongko,” Tempo, June 21, 2021, <https://seleb.tempo.co/read/1474790/film-nussa-disebut-kampanyekan-taliban-ini-balasan-keren-angga-sasongko>; tim detikhot, “Soal Heboh Film Nussa Dituduh Taliban!,” detikhot, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://hot.detik.com/movie/d-5613857/soal-heboh-film-nussa-dituduh-taliban>.

are Muslims. So, for us, it is normal if, for example, there are Islamic elements in the story. The stories we make are children from Islam; the stories are Islamic. We have to check if, for example, there is a verse or hadith that we use, we cross-check, and we make sure that it is not misquoted. Then the Quran, then the hadith is indeed a sahih hadith. The rest, we still refer to those that are not strange from the general view in Indonesia. More like that, so that we do not want to be counterproductive between what we want to make and what the public response will be, we do not make it too counterproductive. So we tend to be more moderate.”¹¹⁴

Turning to Ibra Berkisah, an animation whose story idea was written by Yuda Wirafianto, a figure who was also behind the animation *Nussa and Riko The Series*, although Islamic symbols are pretty visible in the animation, the Islamic values shared are Islamic values that are thick with the Indonesian context because the background of the story is pesantren and the story setting is the life of santri. To ensure wider acceptance and facilitate collaborations, it becomes important to present more "inclusive" content that avoids controversial symbols of Islamic ideology

Negotiating da'wa and commodification in Indonesian Islamic animation entails a complex relationship. Animation creators face the challenge of preserving the essence of da'wa while operating within the commercial constraints of the animation industry. By engaging religious experts, and adopting alternative financing models, animators can navigate this negotiation and create impactful Islamic animations that resonate with audiences while remaining true to their original intent.

¹¹⁴ Bimo Ananto, Producer *Riko The Series*, Google Meet, June 20, 2023.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Riko The Series animation is the brainchild of Garis Sepuluh, a corporation focused on developing Islamic entertainment content, initiated by Teuku Wisnu, Arie Untung, and Yuda Wirafianto. While the production process of Riko The Series involves a team of dozens of individuals, the fundamental idea and concept behind the animation originate from the founders of Garis Sepuluh. Teuku Wisnu and Arie Untung are associated with the hijrah artist movement and Musawah study. At the same time, Yuda Wirafianto has connections with YukNgaji, an Islamic deepening study group driven by Felix Siau, a prominent preacher from HTI, an Islamic transnational movement that the government has since disbanded. Before his involvement in Riko The Series, Yuda Wirafianto played a significant role in initiating and elevating Nussa animation, the most successful Indonesian Islamic animation known for its long-form Islamic animation films. Yuda Wirafianto is also recognized as one of the initiators of Ibra Berkisah animation, and he even contributed story ideas for the animation.

The relaxation of media regulations following the fall of the New Order regime and the emergence of private television channels have profoundly impacted the rise of celebrity preachers. Simultaneously, the widespread availability of the internet and the increasing popularity of social media have empowered individuals proficient in digital technology to amplify their influence. This opportunity is not restricted to individuals with excellent verbal communication skills, attractive appearances, and pleasant voices; it also extends to those with digital skills like audio and video editing and animation creation, enabling them to establish a formidable presence without physical performance.

Indonesian Islamic animation propagates Islam through three primary means: storytelling, visualization, and musicalization. Storytelling involves transmitting Islamic values through animated characters and their interactions, often including direct references to the Quran or hadith. For example, in the episode "AKU

SAYANG BUNDA," the character Father advises Riko by quoting a hadith about the virtue of filial piety to both parents. Visualization focuses on presenting Islamic teachings in visual form, such as calligraphy displayed in the living room or female characters wearing hijab. Musicalization is evident in animations like Ibra Berkisah, which explicitly incorporates musical drama elements, although not all episodes contain musicalized aspects of the *sirah nabawiyah*. An example of musicalization can be found in the first episode, with the musicalized rendition of "Membelah Bulan."

Indonesian Islamic Animation cannot be easily confined to simplistic categorizations such as Islamism, post-Islamism, or the current trend of pop-Islamism. Through my study, it becomes evident that elements from these three concepts are present in the cases analyzed as the creators navigate their ideological beliefs in response to market demands and the wider socio-political landscape.

Balancing da'wa and commodification poses a challenge for animation production teams. They must navigate the complex task of ensuring Islamic messages remain authentic and impactful while considering market preferences and financial aspects. One approach to achieving this balance is seeking the review of da'wa content by religious experts to maintain the integrity of Islamic da'wa while adhering to commercial boundaries. In the case of Ibra Berkisah, Ustaz Khidir Lc.MA and Ustaz Ilham Martasya'bana reviewed the aspects of *Sirah Nabawiyah* in the animation. Although not explicitly mentioned, Riko The Series consulted with scholars to prevent potential adverse impacts without specifying the scholar's name.

Collaborating with religious organizations and like-minded institutions or seeking funding from philanthropic sources is another approach to navigate the negotiation between da'wa and the market. This approach alleviates the pressure to prioritize profitability, allowing the da'wa message to take precedence. By securing adequate funding and resources through non-commercial means, animation creators can maintain artistic and creative control over their projects, ensuring that religious content remains at the forefront. Riko The Series has made efforts in this direction.

The impact of religious commodification continues to be a topic of scholarly debate, specifically concerning whether it leads to a more exclusive or inclusive form of Islam. This research found that Indonesian Islamic Animation, which serves as a medium for da'wa, catering to Indonesian Muslim families seeking content to guide their children, to ensure wider acceptance and facilitate collaborations, it becomes important to present more "inclusive" content that avoids controversial symbols of Islamic ideology. This approach enables animation to be embraced by the public and facilitates partnerships with external entities, including government agencies. By adopting this approach, Indonesian Islamic Animation can effectively navigate the challenges of religious commodification and successfully promote Islamic values while maintaining a broad appeal. However, due to the high production costs involved, the animation production team must also create opportunities for market expansion and collaborate with external stakeholders to sustain the dissemination of Islamic values through animated videos.

This thesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how Muslim communities are increasingly realizing the importance of engaging in Islamizing popular culture. The high cost of producing animations has pushed them towards greater openness to collaboration, while obscuring certain symbols of Islamic ideology in order to survive in the animation industry. This research seeks to add to the literature on Islam and popular culture, focusing on Islamic animations that are currently aired in Indonesia through several social media platforms and television.

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