

## The Phenomenon of “Celebrity Ustadz” in Indonesia On the Ethics of Dakwahtainment

Fenomena “Ustadz Seleberti” di Indonesia, Etika dalam Dakwahtainment

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### ABSTRACT

*One of the most striking trend of ‘Popular Islam’ in Indonesia is the emerging of celebrity ustadz within the last decade. This phenomenon portrays a modern and fashionable Islam, however, it is also fears to degrade virtuous values of ustadz. This phenomenon appears prominently along with the political reformation in Indonesia in the late of 1990s. The emerging celebrity ustadzs with glamorous life-style and highly exposure to public have changed not merely the image of ustadz and the interaction pattern between ustadz and the followers (umma), but also gave rise what the so-called “dakwahtainment.” Now, here is the interaction between ustadz (like an idol-artist) with his fans or followers. This trend also represents an ideal blend between religion (Islam), television industry, and capitalism. The commodification of Islam is obvious, with superficial actors, producers, and consumers. From both, the measure of the ethics of Ulamaship (traditional clerical moral qualifications) and ethics of dakwah, the phenomenon of ustadz celeb is a new Islamic culture that is unethical. Therefore, many Indonesian Muslims, especially Muslim intelligentsia, were very disappointed. In fact, it causes a lot of cynicism. The ustadz profession, especially celebrity ustadz, is now considered “low”, and the only thing that is “high” seem to be their rate and their life style.*

*Keywords: Celebrity ustadz; dakwahtainment; television industry; Islamic commodification; dakwah ethics; low culture and high culture*

### ABSTRAK

*Salah satu trend yang paling menonjol dan populer ialah munculnya ustadz selebriti Islam di Indonesia dalam dekad yang lalu. Fenomena ini menggambarkan Islam moden dan bergaya, bagaimanapun, ia juga dikhuatiri merendahkan nilai-nilai mulia ustadz. Fenomena ini nampaknya jelas bersama-sama dengan reformasi politik di Indonesia pada lewat 1990-an. Para ustadz selebriti yang baru muncul dengan gaya hidup glamor dan pendedahan luas kepada orang ramai telah mengubah bukan sekadar imej ustadz dan corak interaksi antara ustadz dan pengikut (umma), tetapi juga menimbulkan apa yang dipanggil “dakwahtainment”. Proses interaksi di sini kelihatan secara terus antara ustadz (seperti artis-idola) dengan peminat atau pengikutnya. Trend ini juga mewakili gabungan yang ideal antara agama (Islam), industri televisyen, dan kapitalisme. Proses “komodifikasi” Islam adalah jelas, dengan pelakon, pengeluar, dan pengguna. Daripada kedua-dua ukuran nilai etika Ulamaship (kelayakan tradisional moral perkeranian) dan etika dakwah, fenomena ustadz selebriti adalah budaya Islam yang tidak beretika. Oleh itu, ramai orang Islam Indonesia, terutama golongan bijak pandai Islam, sangat kecewa. Malah, ia menyebabkan banyak pandangan sinis dilemparkan terhadap golongan ustadz ini. Profesion ustadz, terutama ustadz selebriti kini dianggap “rendah”, dan satu-satunya perkara yang “tinggi” tentang golongan ini ialah populariti dan gaya hidup mereka.*

*Kata kunci: Ustadz selebriti; dakwahtainment; industri televisyen; komodifikasi Islam; etika dakwa;, budaya rendah dan budaya tinggi*

### INTRODUCTION: ISLAMIC POP CULTURE AND THE BIRTH OF THE CELEBRITY USTADZ

Celebrity ustadz or “pop ustadz”, sometimes cynically referred to as “commercial ustadz”, is a phenomenon of the contemporary Islamic culture growing in Indonesia. Using perspectives of pop culture criticism, in which the issue of commodification of Islam is contrasted with the

perspective of conventional ethics of Islamic *dakwah*, this article looks at the dynamic dispute surrounding the phenomenon. The common and conventional definition of the ethics of *dakwah* is “the rules or principles that define right and wrong attitude in enforcing *dakwah*”. Hamzah Yaqub, an Indonesian Muslim scholars and *dakwah* activists, defines the ethics of *dakwah* as “the systematical principles of commendable moral action and good

behavior to be possessed of a missionary, which in accordance with the teachings of Islam (Yaqub 1996: 13)”. In agreement with Yaqub, Professor A. Hasjmy, a scholar and prominent Acehese Muslim clerics, who understand the ethics of *dakwah* as “a set of norms *dakwah* and moral preaching as signs that must be owned by the dai, where the *dakwah* norms and morals becomes a basic principle in the realization of the purpose and essence of Islam (Hasjmy 1990: 188-195)”. In other words, the purpose and essence *dakwah* will not be achieved, if a ustadz or *dai* does not have commendable morals.

Observers say that the phenomenon of increasing religious consumption surrounding Islam, is the result of a process of modernization, urbanization, and globalization. Greg Fealy noted that this phenomenon began to appear in Indonesia around 1970 when the Suharto regime opened the flow of global capitalism and the set of cultural values attached to it. This shook the foundations of society’s old culture and stimulated perception changes in religion. There arose an awareness of the formation of a new identity that had urban lifestyle consumption patterns. Religious identity experienced one of the most violent shocks. Certainty in the moral order and old identity was being transformed or was even lost in the new global capitalist lifestyle where consumption becomes the primary measure (Fealy 2008: 27-28).

Fealy further noted that the general response to this shock was to balance it with the search for sources of new moral guidance or religion that would suit this new lifestyle (Fealy 2008: 28). Religious authority was no longer a monopoly of authoritative institutions such as the ustadzs or *kyais* at *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools) and Islamic colleges. Modern people needed something easily explored, ordered, and purchased from the market. Personal choice and personal satisfaction are characteristic of modern life. Strong demand pushed the market to swiftly respond and pander to the client’s needs. It was at the end of the 1980s, that capitalist television captured a large share of the thriving religious market. This was marked by the emergence of the “million-followers preacher” (*Dai sejuta umat*) Zaenudin MZ on screen. The television screen had great impact on what is called ‘instant Islamic lifestyle’.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, when did the Islamic market begin to take shape? Noorhaidi Hasan (2009: 231) gives an overview of its background. It started when the Suharto regime (in addition to its hard stance towards

expression of political Islamic groups) gave the foundation for marketing Islamic culture. This new Islamic pop culture represents the hugest part of a consumerism that provides significant signs of social status and political affiliation. It has even become a symbol of elitism and is considered a path to success.

As an agenda to address the latent threat of communism in the post-1965 era, Suharto adopted in the early 1970s a policy known as the *agamanisasi* project (at the time by propagating the need to choose among five religions recognized by the government). This was a blessing and a breath of fresh air for several Islamic groups, which preached Islamic moral and personal piety. Islam was offered at this stage as the guardian of ethics and discipline to mobilize the community and participate in the development of Islam (Hasan 2009: 232). Easy transportation and telecommunications technology, both blessings of globalization, also allowed Indonesian Islam to connect more easily with the wider Islamic world. In conjunction with the Muslim world euphoria marked by the rise and victory of the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979 and the popular message of Islamic movements which with its famous *motto* “Islam is the Solution” lay emphasis on political culture amongst *dakwah* activists on campus and off-campus, the political atmosphere surrounding Islamic culture inevitably also created tension in the cultural politics of the public sphere. This is because Islam is seen as “a complete system governing all religious, social, political, cultural and economic orders and encompassing all things material, spiritual, societal, individual, and personal. Battles over dress, morality, marriage, celebrations, entertainment, sexuality, and faith as well as conflicts over governance and law are thus at the center of the call” (Hasan 2009: 232).

The fall of the New Order regime in 1998 opened the faucet of political Islam, which in turn initiated a guerilla movement under the mask of cultural *dakwah*. Its effects turned out to be not so pleasing in the political expression of the Indonesian Muslim population. Particularly, the stigma of being a terrorist began for those whose methods in the ‘marketing’ of Islam were considered too radical after the Bali bombing in 2007. Nevertheless, the growth towards a more fundamentalist Islam in the sense of its cultural expression could not be denied. Eventually, it began to influence people’s attitude and lifestyle. This is mainly apparent in the niche that calls for a return to the ‘authentic’ Islam, in the sense of ‘Salafism’ whom some people suspect

as being 'Wahhabist' or a hybrid of both schools of thought. Both refuge in the same issue of the *Syariatisasi* (Sharia-isation) of communities and nations (Ary Budiyanto 2010: 12-25). As Patrick Haenni noted, this Islamic cultural phenomenon was "derived from an explicit ideology, it plays into the hands of the dominant discourse (of today), which is Salafi" (Haenni 2009: 328). The Sharia and tauhid ideology that Salafi-Wahhabi offers is simple and easy, since it mostly relies on the strict and literal interpretation and meaning of Wahhabi *fiqh* (Islamic law), supposedly of a rich Islamic historical philosophy and tradition.

Moreover, while the contemporary 'political' world was still preoccupied with the conquest of the public sphere, the Islamic market also morphed into its unique reality. It tries to supply Islamic products<sup>2</sup> as needed consumption to be expressed in personal and the public spaces. The demand for Islamic products emerged as the market significantly grew due to media exposure of (*dakwah*) Islamic institutions and their call to embrace Islamic culture and the direct discourse within communities.

The encounter of the Islamic cultural market with modern capitalism 'lifestyle' created a new entity that was sometimes suspect to both, the zealously Islamic or "the fanatics" and the holders of 'authority' in Islamic knowledge and spirituality. These groups suspect popular Islamic lifestyle as having the "dumbing down" effect, are fully trivial, in bad taste and lacking the depth of religious knowledge. But as a product, it is supported and driven by the capital strength of the mass media, especially television (Dicky Sofjan 2013: 73-74). It quenches the thirst of the larger Muslim market, the common people, who desperately wished for alternative entertainment without being burdened by political schism of Islam elites. The reasoning is simple; they want to 'escape' for a moment from the hectic and weary days of their life while at the same time gaining God's merit.

#### DAKWAHTAINMENT AND RELIGIOUS COMMODIFICATION

John Storey (1996) stated that television is the most popular media which transforms the ideology of mass/pop culture and its interests to the people/audience. Hence, being part of the media industry, television places the masses as the consumer of commodities. Therefore, to conquer

the market, each program was made as attractive as possible to impress the audience and quench their thirst for pleasurable programs. The demands for a more modern religious entertainment was taken up by the Indonesian television industries, by creating programs that are currently called "*dakwahtainment*."<sup>3</sup> Dicky Sofjan has an interesting views about this *dakwahtainment*. As it is well known that the term *dakwah* means Islamic preaching (Islamic propagation), and "*tainment*" is from the English word "entertainment" (Sofjan 2013: 48). Sofjan then defines *dakwahtainment* as:

...a concept amalgamating Islamic propagation and the innumerable forms of entertainment programs broadcast through the medium of television, allowing millions of home viewers to watch and receive their messages. In its application, the notion of *dakwahtainment* is guided by a strict principle used by media executives, producers and creative teams, who often operationalize it in terms of *tuntunan* (spiritual guidance) and *tontonan* (entertainment viewing) (Sofjan 2013: 49).

In a simple way, "*dakwahtainment* is a concept combining *dakwah* and entertainment in television broadcast. The phenomenon denotes the proliferation and amplification of popular Islam, where "fans", "friends" and "followers" participate through the medium of television and transform themselves into a *jamaah* (religious congregation)" (Sofjan 2013: 73). One can interpret Sofjan's notion on the nature of *dai* in an entertainment shows as also imply to what the chair of the board of Muhammadiyah Professor Yunahar Ilyas critical concerned when he asked to a television crew about the criteria for *dai/ustadz* on such *dakwahtainment* program, the crew member answered that the *dai* should be handsome, photogenic, seemingly pious and preferably a funny person.<sup>4</sup> In short, a criteria of *dai/ustadz-tainment* is the one who has a charisma of celebrity-idol.<sup>5</sup> Sofjan supported this and notes that "it is through television that these celebrity *ustadz* gain their credibility and authority, challenging the conventional power and charismatic appeal of the *Kyais* (Javanese, religious scholar-teachers), whose base have been largely centered in and around the *Pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools)" (Sofjan 2013: 73-74).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, as part of pop culture, *dakwahtainment* belongs to the scheme of political economy, namely cultural patterns formed by industry and commodity production, which is based on the profit motive and the accumulation of capital. Religion, for this reason, becomes a commodity. It appears from its forms, manners, strategies, techniques, illusions,

and the popular imagination that is used in various religious activities: preaching, worship, rituals, and ceremonies (Yasraf Amir Piliang 2011: xl).

Undoubtedly, religious commodification then allied with the *dakwahtainment*. Kitiarsa, as quoted by Sofjan, argues that religious commodification is a complex historical and cultural construction that does not necessitate the arrival of “religious malaise”, or even “produce new religious forms and movements that oppose the institutionalized beliefs and practices of religious organizations”. This commodification is deemed to turn religion into marketable goods, bringing them into various scales and modes of market transaction. Sofjan notes that in the case of Indonesian *dakwahtainment*, it is wholly apparent that the commodity here is Islam, and that the targeted consumers are the burgeoning Indonesian Muslim middle class (Sofjan 2013: 82).

According to Fealy, the process of commodified Islam is not just the phenomenon of widespread ‘consumption’ of Islam, but it also reflects rising religiosity in Indonesia and that the growing consumption and prominence of Islamic products drives further Islamisation (Fealy 2008: 26). Accordingly, in *dakwahtainment*, there is an assumption that such activities not merely a kind of entertainment but also a worship (“Islamic propagation”). Due to the close ‘alliance’ between worshiping and trading, *dakwahtainment* initially gained a huge response from the Muslim community.

However, from the pop culture perspective, the popular on screen *dai* or *ustadz* apparently enjoy this life style in which the way of their thinking, rituality, symbols became popular all-round (Piliang 2011: xl). Indeed, it could be said that popularity becomes the only measurement of credibility of an *ustadz*. Consequently, the public marked (some time cynically mocked) them as celebrity *ustadz*. Idealist Muslims saw this as the signs of the shifting or even degradation of noble values of the *dai* profession as seen from the point of view of conventional ethics of *dakwah*. The relationship between an *ustadz* with his audience also experiences a significant shift analogous to a fans-idol relationship (Piliang 2011: 179).

#### TELE-DAI<sup>7</sup>: WHAT WENT WRONG WITH ‘TELEVIZING’ DAKWAH

As mentioned earlier, the phenomenon of celebrity preacher as part of popular culture is closely

associated with the development of industrialization, capitalism, and consumerism. Seeing that the logic of *dakwahtainment* is congruent with the industry of capitalism, the preacher on-screen is inescapably treated as a professional entertainer, thus a TV-star is being born. Sofjan notes “... It is through television that these celebrity *ustadz* gain their credibility and authority...” (Sofjan 2013: 49). This is true for the most part, as in the case of *ustadz* Solmed, a popular *dai* and former member of FPI (*Front Pembela Islam*, Islamic Defenders Front) who married an artist, April Jasmine, after controversially divorcing his previous wife. Solmed flippantly admitted this ‘truth’ concerning the relation of infotainment with the popularity of an *ustadz* by saying, “*Mungkin publik telah menganggap saya seleb, jadi mungkin juga mereka ingin lebih dekat dengan saya. Makanya infotainment meresponnya*”<sup>8</sup> (The public may regard me as a celebrity, so maybe they also want to be closer to me. That’s why infotainment responds).

Thus, the mutual benefits between these *ustadz* with television, print media and cyber-gossip media industry (such as tabloids, Okezone.com and others), at certain level made many Muslims mock the celebrity *dais* attitude. People call them ‘*ustadz* artist or artisted-*ustadz*’ as they often appear as a cameo or even real artist (of course acting as an *ustadz*) in *sinetron* (electronic cinema), commonly known *Sinetron Religi* (religious electronic cinema). Moreover, it is not uncommon and no secret that some of them also try their luck in the recording industry as a singer and launching their so-called “*Album Religi*” in every upcoming Ramadan month. Another type of on-screen *ustadz*, which is not so famous, is “the healer *ustadz*” (mystical *ustadz*) who sometimes co-stars in ‘religiously’ mystical documentary dramas such as *Dunia Ghaib* (The World of the Unseen), *Dunia Lain* (The Other World) and the most dramatic of all, the *Pemburu Hantu* (Ghost Busters). Guntur Bumi is an alumnae of the latter two programs. Apparently, there are some levels of *modus operandi* to achieve the title of ‘Ustadz Seleb’ (Celebrity Ustadz):

1. The preachings are not complicated and profound. The most important thing is how to entertain Muslim people. They themselves are not really religious scholars who have high qualifications.
2. Becoming famous due to popularity of personal *dakwah* programs on television, using it as a mean to advertise a product (brand ambassador): eg Mamah Dedeh, Jefry al-Buchori (Uje)<sup>9</sup> and

- Nur Maulana. A less famous but similar stand alone ustadz type, is the dakwah program of ustadz healers, such as Haryono and others. There is public suspicion that these ustadz 'buy' television-blocking time of their *dakwah* programs and sell their products of healing service and herbal medicines (Ariyanto 2009: 95-104).<sup>10</sup> In comparison, the first mode mostly stems from the work of the creative team of the television industry. They often look for a local ustadz considered prospective to be promoted.
3. Attaining popularity through the display of artists<sup>11</sup> (especially female) during on-air *dakwah* programs. The *dais* credibility heightened through the guest artist's comments about their persona. Artists are helpful in selling the ustadz image. Recently, Nur Maulana is the best model of this kind of number. Along with an artist he still preaches every morning in Trans-TV with his famous slogan: "*jamaah... ooh...jamaah*".
  4. Winning the Ustadz Idol competition, in a contest *ala* American Idol. Ustadz Hariri rose in the television industry through this way. Although, it seems, most graduates of this kind of idol search, are seen more as actors, and become an idol clerics preaching in their respective areas and more frequently preach on the radio.
  5. An interesting phenomenon lately is the most instant way of attaining popularity ustadz and that is by marrying an artist. It is not to oversee that the infotainment industry views potential rating hikes when specific ustadz figure (like Solmed and Aa Gym) are involved in controversial or even trivial issues.<sup>12</sup>

The trend of ustadzs marrying artists includes: Aa Hadi married to Chece Kirani. He was active in *Renungan* (Contemplation, Metro TV), and *Titian Qolbu* (Heart Arrangement, O Channel TV). Recently, he is active in *Titian Iman* (Faith Arrangement, O Channel TV) with his wife as TV-host. Although married to an artist, his personal life is not so dramatic in infotainment compared to Solmed or Guntur Bumi.

As stated earlier, ustadz 'Solmed' (sometime mocked by people as 'Soulmad') whose stage name is an abbreviation of his real name Sholeh Mahmud is also married to an artist. Solmed was also active as presenter in several TV programs.<sup>13</sup> His dramatic personal love and life affairs are

occasionally covered in infotainment. For instance, when infotainment exposed of his dramatic episode when his wife, Jasmine April, was hospitalized due to serious problems with her pregnancy.<sup>14</sup> Gossip-tainment helped rocket Solmed popularity. "God willing, it is because a lot of people who loved me, would want to watch", said April Jasmine's husband.

Another ustadz married to an artist is Guntur Bumi. He is typically a hybrid of modus number *one* and *four*. His real name is Muhammad Susilo Wibowo and is popularly known as Cilik Guntur Bumi Al Qurthubi and claims that this nickname was given by former President Abdurahman Wahid (Gus Dur). Guntur Bumi was married to Puput Melati, a famous singer. He is an active presenter in the alternative treatment program *Syiar & Doa* of Jogja TV. His popularity was launched as one of the stars in a famous reality mystical documentary drama: *Pemburu Hantu* (Ghost Buster). His controversial healing service is infamous for the exorbitant fees he asks of his patients and is accused of being far removed from Sharia.<sup>15</sup> Recently, *Fokus Selebriti* (Global TV) infotainment spotlighted his personal life, unfolding the deception of his healing services. Guntur Bumi attempted to counter these 'rumors' by appearing in other infotainment programs that showed his good deeds and charities (when this article is writing down he is still in his trial process because of his deceptive activities in his alternative healing services).

Another ustadz married to an artist is Ahmad Zacky Abdullah, known as Zacky Mirza, or Bang Zeck. He is married to Shinta Tanjung. He was one of the top 5 finalists in DAI TPI's 2005 (*Dai Idol*). His business activities include: *Mimbar Dai* (TPI), *Duet Tausiyah* (TPI), *Mata Hati* (O Channel), *Operasi Kamboja* (TPI), *Cermin Hati* (Global TV), *Dapur Aisyah* (Global TV), *Damai Indonesiaku* (TVOne), *Assalamualaikum Ustadz* (RCTI), *Haji Wali* (*Hayuk Ngaji Bareng Wali Band*) (TRANS 7), *Pintu Surga* (Trans TV), *Syi'ar Jalanan* (TV One) and many others. Although less spotlighted as infotainment, he is indeed a very popular television personage. Looking at his professional name card one may say that he is an ustadz that acknowledges himself as being an artist, using the email: *artistreligi@yahoo.com*. Apparently, CVs are very important for these ustadzs. No doubt, through its people assume that the weight of their purses will increase steadily.

Looking at the above modus operandi, one finds that the ustadzs and television industries are interdependent as in the case of chasing the rating

program.<sup>16</sup> Nowadays, both cleric and the television industry are even more aware of the importance and power of the new media in image creation through popularizing Islamic teachings. They realize that directly or indirectly, image setting increases their income. By lifting their image in the Islamic market, television retains much advertisement for their religious programs. As for the clerics, they receive a multitude of invitations to give on/off stages lectures. Thus, it not only brings blessing and sustenance to their programs, the large audience these preaching programs have attracts companies to place commercials. This happens mainly before, during, and after Ramadan month, as in the case of Uje with the supplement drink *Extra Joss*, *AS telkomsel* simcard cell phone with Nur Maulana, and supplement drinks *cap Kaki Tiga* with Mamah Dedeh.<sup>17</sup> Other forms of *dakwah* business have also mushroomed, like Hajj and Umrah Services, Muslim fashion and boutiques or multi level marketing of Islamic *halal* products. In addition, this phenomena has created new services like ustadz agencies (such as the Ustadz Center and Dai Management)<sup>18</sup> and its supporting Production House (PH).<sup>19</sup>

The impact of the celebrity ustadz' lifestyle made popular through television has been a concern to the *umma* and especially MUI (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, Indonesian Council of Ulama) be it at the regional level or even at its center in Jakarta. An official of the Riau Province MUI, Muhammadun explained, "preaching is an obligation for every Muslim, either orally or in deed. One of the *dakwah*

goals is to continue the life of Islamic preaching. The object of the mission is to reach all of humanity, whether Muslim or not yet Muslim. Thus, because it is a duty, it is not feasible to charge *dai*, much less commercializing this", said Muhammadun to merdeka.com. "[But] what we see on television now appears to be a degradation. When we degradethe *dai* to just being a simple lecturer, the *dakwah* activity becomes just like stand-up comedy. It is then most dangerous when a preacher turns it into a profession. [Again] *dai* is obligatory for every Muslim. Indonesia has many genuine preachers who do not have to appear on television. They also have thousands of *umma*", he stated.<sup>20</sup>

Decisions in the television industry are often rating based. As the rating for *dakwah* programs soared, MUI realized that society accepted serious messages better when it was presented in a lighter preaching style that was both humorous and entertaining. Therefore, MUI-center has set up a training program to the celebrity ustadz. MUI chairman, Ma'ruf Amin hoped that training programs would strengthen the TV-*dais* knowledge, thus making their themes closer to people's need. Nevertheless, the decision to start these training programs met with critic from within the ranks. Scathing criticism about the phenomenon of celebrity ustadz came from Ahmad Sarwat, graduate of Al-Azhar Cairo. Stating that characteristics of TV *dais* are far from an ustadz' principles and he noted the "Twelve Differences between an Artist Ustadz and the real Ustadz":<sup>21</sup>

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Ustadz</b>
Needs a manager	Needs a library
Charges a high fee <sup>22</sup>	Is paid by saying "Syukran" (thank you)
Performed according to taste	Performed for the sake of heavenly messages
Not studied enough in religion	Mandatory studies in pesantren and/or college for years
Thirst for popularity	Thirst for knowledge and God's blessing
Familiar with living a lie	Familiar with sanctity, simplicity and humility
Collecting the audience	Educating and creating prospective scholars
Needs acting	Teaching heartfully
Entertaining	Teaching knowledge
Needs media, TV and the press	Needs assembly of knowledge seeker <sup>23</sup>
Become commercial star	Prefer to speak the truth
Surrounded by fans <sup>24</sup>	Surrounded by umma who want to take lessons and purify themselves

Despite much criticism of the TV-dai lifestyle, Islamic authorities such as the MUI, scholars, and even commoners found that becoming an ustadz appeared to be an ideal profession. It is common now that parents urge their daughters to wed an ustadz. Being an ustadz is now a popular profession, especially since there is hope to break through into the television industry.

For rating based dakwah activities on television, according to Piliang, it is no longer taboo to enliven the program with popular comedy, music, dance, and pantomime acts that could spark the imagination and fantasy of the viewers. Various mass psychologies commonly used in popular culture, such as those that generate and control emotions (crying, hysterical, or ecstasy) are now also used in the world of *dakwah*. The popular *dai* is similar to the role of a superstar in the presence of fans (*umma*) (Piliang 2011: 179). Fetishism and the worship of idols, in this case the *dai*, become prevalent. Most of the “*umma*” then passively mimic habits, appearance, and style of their superstar *dai* (dress and hairdo for instance), and eager to collect all trinkets about their idol *dai* (Piliang 2011: 179).

Many Muslims in Indonesia generally prefer the lifestyle of popular culture that is constructed for them, even if it is not authentic according to conventional Islamic perspective. There is a desire for popularity, in the same vein the celebrity ustadz also competes in appearance and life style, forgetting the task of maintaining the sanctity of the religion itself, including their own sanctity from excessive hedonism and the mundane (Piliang 2011: 185). Piliang sees that this interesting phenomenon shows two tendencies in the body of Islamic society, *first*, the *umma* who imitates their religious idol's appearance and apparel in terms of fashion. *Second*, are those who try to combine their “religious” performance with their mundane lifestyle. This eclecticism leads to contradictions: for example, wearing the hijab with tight jeans and a shirt that show the contours of the body, popularly known as ‘Jilboob’ or ‘*jilbab lontong*’ (Piliang 2011: 180).

In the end, popular culture and the popular imagination that accompany this popular *dakwah*, has now brought about major changes in the degree of religiosity. Profane attitudes, forms, strategies, and popular culture values mingle and even contaminate the transcendental dimension. This is referred to as the cultural contradictions of religion, the paradox between sanctity and profanity, the divine and the mundane, piety and pleasure.

In other words, there is a process of hybridity (i.e. cross breeding) between the sacred and the mundane, majesty and superficiality, glory and banality, altitude and surface (Piliang 2011: xl-xli). Piliang calls it religious schizophrenia, a state of the split-self (divided self) or plural-self (multiple self). Religious leaders and people who are stuck in this kind of schizophrenic culture are no longer able to distinguish with certainty the lawful (*halāl*) from the unlawful (*harām*) or the sacred from the profane (Piliang 2011: 181-182).

Following Piliang, who sees the value and role of popular culture based on the dichotomy of high and low culture *ala* Adorno, he argued that the phenomenon of celebrity ustadz with their popular *dakwah* are clearly seen as “children born from the low culture”.<sup>25</sup> Indeed if we compare this phenomenon with the context of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals in the past there is a sharp deterioration compared to the *dakwah* television programs of the 1970s to mid-1990s. Although having limited television presence, at that time Indonesian Muslims were served with “good nutrition of dakwah” namely vigorous, intelligent, and productive debates on Islamic discourse. At that time, important Indonesian Muslim intellectuals appeared such as Nurcholish Madjid with the idea of renewal of Islamic Thought, Abdurrahman Wahid with the idea of Indigenization of Islam, Harun Nasution with Rational Islam, Munawir Syadzali with Re-Actualization of Islamic Law, Jalaluddin Rakhmat with Actual Islam, Kuntowijoyo, Adi Sasono and Dawam Rahardjo with Transformative Islam, Amin Rais and Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif with the issue of Islamic Modernism.

These figures cultivated a “high culture” that was innovative and creative. The current popular culture in contemporary Islam, especially the phenomenon of celebrity ustadz, is instead rather common, average and vulgar. The culture born is of low quality, stunted creativity, bad taste, and is less innovative, simply because their *dakwah* is to entertain the congregation and [should] based on script program (Piliang 2011: 73-74). Besides this negative view, it should also be positively recognized that many Muslims have also learned Islam from these celebrity ustadz and raped much benefit from them. Through the current media presence, Islam came to be known widely as popular life style one can aspire to; no longer solely seen as an outdated and ‘exclusive’ religion.

Speaking about the phenomenon of these celebrity ustadz on the television using Piliang's cultural study perspectives would be a little bit coarse to the reality of Indonesian Muslim *dakwah* performances. In this context, Sofjan criticized the behavior of the low jokes and unethical at religious events on television that presents celebrity ustadz. As is commonly known, comedians have been an integral part of the Indonesian television industry for quite some time (Sofjan 2013: 69). Sofjan asserts that television comedy still contain negative things such as making fun of physical attributes, sexual innuendos, mocking underprivileged people, and undermining religion (Sofjan 2013: 71). Ironically, in *dakwahtainment*, comedy and preaching (*dakwah*) collaborate. As in fact, Muslims do not recognized (or concerned enough) the high or low level of *dakwah*, as a prank performance of *dakwah* is a common feature in larger society even sometimes colored with *sexual content*, crude and silly *humor*. Present figures of such kyais, to mention a few, are: KH Emha Ainun Nadjib of Yogyakarta, Kyai Gaul Anwar Zahid of Bojonegoro, KH Makruf Islamuddin of Sragen, or late Dr. Damardjati Supadjar and etcetera.<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, for Sofjan, "many *dakwahtainment* programmes deliberately deploy props, scripts and setups based on comedies of error to support Islamic propagation. Celebrity ustadzs such as the late Uje, Yusuf Mansyur and mamah Dedeh are all partnered with comedians, who act as their host or programme counterpart" (Sofjan 2013: 84). Again, for Sofjan, the inclusion of such comedians in the *dakwahtainment* programmers is indeed ironic (Sofjan 2013: 86). I wholeheartedly agree with Sofjan that, in the light of 'conventional normative' ethics of *dakwah* in Indonesia such as explained by Hamzah Yaqub (1996: 13), the actions and behaviors of the celebrity ustadz are in principle contradictory to the normative ethical values that Islam espouses (Sofjan 2013: 62). From the point of preaching matters, "the contents of their talks are supposedly to lighten up, not enlighten.... The *dakwahtainment* phenomenon has therefore transformed what used to be serious-minded *dakwah* programmers into religious preaching and gathering filled with routine anecdotes and jokes" (Sofjan 2013: 74). It is also important to underline that the humor is very important in preaching, but the humor must be in accordance with Islamic ethics. According to Sofjan, "one of Islamic humor characteristics is the absence of any tasteless, vulgar or offensive

materials. There are no victims nor any cause for any casualties of the heart" (Sofjan 2013: 79). *Of course, compared to the 1970-1990s dakwah performances standard, but it depends also on the intellectual taste of the audiences, the present intellectual performances of dais/ustadz of dakwahtainment seem less intellectual. Nevertheless, the rule-guidance of the dakwah performance is through the wisdom: "Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way..."* (Sūra al-Nahl: 125), whereas as one of this verse meanings cannot to use *dakwah* 'language' that is apt to its audiences – this situation and condition is representing the less concern of present day Indonesian Muslim congregation. The present Islamic community tends to prefer to be 'the listener' than into 'the learner'. It seems obvious as the targetted mass of *dakwahtainment* is the *majlis taklim* rather than *majlis santri*.

#### 'CELEBRITY USTADZ' AND QUESTIONS OF DAKWAH ETHICS

Conventional *dakwah* science teaches that every Muslim is a *dai*, namely someone who (supposedly) conveys the teachings of Islam to others wisely, in accordance with their respective professions. However, not all Muslim have the qualifications of an ideal *dai*. That is why, in the science of *dakwah*, there are two classes of *dai*, the common and the special *dai*. The common *dai* is the notion that every Muslim is a *dai*. A special *dai* is a Muslim who fulfills the proper qualifications of Islamic science, morality, and most importantly, has dedicated their lives to *dakwah* activity and acts as servant to the *umma*. As stated in the Qur'an in sura Ali 'Imran: 104<sup>27</sup> and al-Tawbat: 122,<sup>28</sup> a special *dai*, is merely seeking the pleasure of God, and does not have the motivation to collect material gains through *dakwah*. That is why, special *dais* from the beginning prepare to serve the *umma* and accepts a variety of obstacles and challenges in *dakwah* (Ade Masturi 2012: 3).

However, in the current world of *dakwah*, there is a view that a special *dai* involves professionalism (see Kayo 2007), and therefore inherently is a professional. Giving *dakwah* is then a profession equal to or more important than a profession as medic, professor, manager, architect, et cetera. In this view, a professional *dai* is worthy of material rewards as well as moral rewards, because preaching activities must be professionally managed. For example, schedules



should be managed and lecture materials well designed and prepared thus necessitating professional management, a suitable wardrobe and honorarium. In this context, celebrity-*dais* considers their *dakwah* activities as a profession and worth paying for in a professional manner as well. The question is: Is it appropriate according to the ethics of *dakwah* if a *dai* charges excessively? How does one understand the basic teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet which emphasizes that *dakwah* activities are a form of God worship and a service of devotion to the *umma* and should simply expect to be repaid with the blessing of God?

A *dai* which also means Ulama (Islamic traditional scholars) is the Prophet's heir. As the saying of the Prophet: "Ulama are the inheritors of the Prophets". Therefore, in the activity of his *dakwah*, *dai* should refer to and emulate the Prophet figure in *dakwah*. This is the most important principle. Ali Mustafa Ya'kub, a leading scholars, director of MUI center and *dakwah* activist, in his work, *Sejarah dan Metode Dakwah Nabi* (2000) (*History and Methods of the Prophet's Dakwah*), wrote a special chapter on the ethics of the Prophet's *dakwah* as a guide for the *dai*. According to him, *dakwah* ethics are the ethics of Islam itself, because *dai* is also a Muslim who is required to have commendable ethics, who distance themselves from despicable behavior. The Prophet had excellent *dakwah* ethics that ought to be emulated. In the ethics, he includes: *First*, speech should be in accordance with proper action. In fact, a *dai* must first practice the teaching before preaching it. The Prophet always showed the correspondence between words with his behavior. According to Ya'kub, this *dakwah* ethics is imperative for every *dai*. If the spoken not match the action, then the *dakwah* is not going to work. Theologically, God does not like hypocrisy as He warned in sura al-Shaf: 2-3 (Ya'kub 2000: 36-37).

*Second*, tolerance should not be done in a matter of faith or belief. Tolerance is only necessary in matters of social interaction. *Third*, the *dai* should not insult other religious beliefs and gods. *Fourth*, the *dai* should not discriminate. According to Ya'kub, the Prophet was not allowed by God to do socio-economic discrimination against people who were the objects of *dakwah*. Whether rich or poor, they should be treated equally. The Prophet was once reprimanded by God when he ignored the blind man (Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktoum) who asked to be taught in Islam because the Prophet was busy discussing with the elites of Mecca (Ya'kub 2000: 37-41).

*Fifth*, a *dai* does not befriend evildoers. If a *dai* became friends and colluded with the evildoers, it may be assumed that the *dai* agrees with vice. *Sixth*, the *dai* must not convey teachings of which he or she is uncertain. That is why the *dai* must have a broad and deep knowledge of Islamic sciences and related sciences. If the problems presented by people are too difficult and complicated, the *dai* should not answer and truthfully answer 'I do not know' or 'only God knows better' (*wallahu a'lam*) (Ya'kub 2000: 44-47). And last but not least, *Seventh*, they may not request payment. According to Ya'kub, a very important point in the Prophet *dakwah* is that he never asked for material rewards from the people, even during Mecca and Medina periods. He only expects compensation (reward) from God alone. It was spoken by God in the al-Saba' 47<sup>29</sup> and Yasin 21.<sup>30</sup> For Ya'kub, the attitude of a *dai* that does not charge gives charisma (authority) to his preaching and frees them from the moral ensnarement. He is only bound by God alone (Ya'kub 2000: 42-43).

Should a *dai* then not receive any compensation at all from their audiences or hosts? Muslim scholars have different opinions about this since there is no definitive explanation (*qath'i*) of the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet.<sup>31</sup> There are three major groups that comment on it: the *first group* is the Hanafi scholars and other like-minded groups. They argue that receiving material reward is absolutely *haram* (unlawful), whether there is a prior agreement or not. Hanafi argues that *dakwah* work is a form of worship which is free of charge. The *dai* is the inheritor of the Prophet who was supposed to call people to worship. Reward by God is the most valuable reward for the *Dai* (Andi Faisal Bakti 2011).

The *second group* is made up of the scholars Imam Malik Ibn Anas, Imam Shafi'i, Imam Hanbal and other like-minded scholars. According to this group, receiving rewards in spreading the teachings of Islam through *dakwah* is permissible, whether or not there is a prior agreement. Shafi'i allows for this wage with an analogy to a Hadith regarding the treatment of the sick by reading *al-Fātiha*. The reader receives remuneration from the hospital. However, this companion of the Prophet who recited *al-Fātiha* did so with a sincere heart, not with the motivation to get paid. This should be a cautionary note for the *dai* or ustadz. The Hanbali also argue that if a tutor or teacher can get a wage of *Bayt al-māl* (House of Wealth), then the *dai* may receive remuneration from the mosque (Faisal Bakti 2011).

The *third group* is made up of scholars like Hasan al-Basri, al-Sha'bi, Ibn Sirin and other scholars. They argue that if agreement were made in advance for a honorarium for the teaching of Islam, then it is *ḥarām*. However, if there is no agreement and those religious teachers are paid, then it is *ḥalāl* (lawful) to receive the rewards (Ya'kub 2000: 43-44).

Ya'kub makes a special note differentiating between scholars who spread Islamic teachings and those who practise preaching. For example, teaching the Qur'an, or explaining the Hadith or *Fiqh*, are activities which transfer knowledge from teacher to student. For this element of service, it is allowed (*ḥalāl*) for scholars to receive rewards. Whereas in the case of reading the Qur'an alone (not teach), the majority of scholars agree that it is *ḥarām* (Ya'kub 2000: 43-44). That is not to say that there are other extreme views. There are scholars who also believe that if a *dai* is not allowed to receive payment for teaching the Qur'an, there is a possibility that the Qur'an will disappear from this earth. This view argues that only a few people have time to teach the Qur'an for free, otherwise they are busy all day with their own affairs and meeting their daily needs. To this, Ya'kub insists that in reading the Qur'an there is no element of service or knowledge transfer. Therefore, reading the Qur'an is really a pure worship to God as prayers (Ya'kub 2000: 43-44).<sup>32</sup>

In the tradition of preaching and teaching of Islam in Indonesia, the majority of Ulamas have customarily not charged fees, let alone putting up high tariffs. Although the Shafi'i school of thought allows for payment agreement, not many do this. Most scholars regard it as religious missionary activities, where purity should not be mixed with material-worldliness. The Shafi'i school however emphasizes the principle of "prudence" (*"ihtiyātan"*) in worship and other religious activities. On preaching, there is a saying that believers "shall not resell the verses of God at a low price" and this verse firmly held. One interpretation of the verse is usually understood by the Indonesian Ulamas not asking payment for lecture activities. For them, religious proselytizing is like planting paddy. If someone ploughs his or her paddy field to grow rice, a lot of grass will grow around the paddy. However, if you plant grass, paddy will not grow around it. With this metaphor, Ulamas believe if they are persistent and sincere in preaching as a form of worship, then God will provide an abundance of material goods. One need not worry. Material goods will come to those

who sincerely follow these principles, like the grass it will grow around the paddy fields.

Many Ulamas also argued that in the archipelago's history of *dakwah*, early preachers such as *Wali Songo* (the Nine Saints of Java) and their disciples, who rather than ask for money, actually carried all costs themselves in order to "Islamize" the Java community. Later, they led the converts sincerely and for the sake of God alone. And God gave an abundance of power and wealth to the saints. This is one of the reasons which lead to the "taboo" of determining a price for giving *dakwah* and asking for payment. For centuries, placing a rate for *dakwah* was unheard of in the world of traditional Indonesian Ulamas. It is therefore understandable that many statements concerning ustadz celebrities and their *dakwah* transaction regarded them as "unethical". Both in the perspective of conventional *dakwah* ethics and the tradition of Indonesian Ulamas, as a profession in which there are elements of sanctity and sacral, the *dakwah* cannot be entirely equated with other worldly (profane) professions.

Andi Faisal Bakti, Professor of Dakwah and Communication at State Islamic University Jakarta, has an interesting view about the commercialization of *dakwah*. According to him, placing a rate on *dakwah* appeared due to the high cost of living in urban environments. In the city, *dais* need to commute and appear dignified, so there is an accumulation of costs transportation, books, proper clothing and of course food. More importantly, they have already paid for school and college with no small cost. Not infrequently, their *umma* (*jamaah*) also asked them for donations, so a *dai* does need a substantial income. Andi Faisal, nonetheless, confirms that *dakwah* is worship, one that should be consequently realized in one's life so as to assure God's acceptance. If a *dai* is only money oriented, it reduce the essences of *dakwah*. Commercialization of *dakwah* is not the teaching of Islam. Andi Faisal prioritizes sincerity in *dakwah*. He termed "business to preach" not vice versa, "preaching to business" (Faisal Bakti 2011).

Nevertheless, Andi Faisal agrees that *dakwah* can be categorized as professional work, albeit without a definite tariff. Professionalism demands that *dais* require high *dakwah* skills, higher education and have adequate training experience. However, sincerity remains a priority, not commercialism. He also provides a solution: *The first*, similar to suggestion from Ibn Khaldun, appreciation of the

*dakwah* shall be left to the market, i.e. society will be able to determine for themselves which *dai* is professional and which is amateur; which is really sincere and which is commercial. *Second*, following the pattern of Ahmad Shalabi, an Egyptian Muslim scholar, who suggested a semi-market model. In this model, in addition to the reward, the government should for example, giving *dais* financial supports as practiced in Muslim Arab countries and Africa (Faisal bakti 2011). Securing the livelihood would allow *dais* to concentrate on preaching.

Besides behavior, use of sugary language that cradles and evokes audience emotion in popular *dakwah* does not fulfill traditional moral standards which view the use of *dakwah* for mere entertainment as unethical. Although their association with many artists can be seen as a positive guidance in the direction of Islamic life, it also has a negative impact because the temptation of their dazzling glamorous world is strong. The closeness of celebrity ustadzs to artists and stars lets also creates scandalous gossip about their relationship with unrelated members of the opposite sex (*non-muhrim*), something which sensationalist media feeds on. In this context, strict moral qualifications commonly held firm by the Ulamas, such as *zuhud* (renunciation), *wara`* (watchfulness), *ikhlas* (sincere), *haya* (shyness), and *iffah* (modesty) can only be fulfilled with great difficulty.

Hence, viewed from the traditional Islamic worldview and ethics of Ulamaship, the phenomenon of celebrity ustadz, is an unethical Islamic culture. For many Muslims, especially Muslim intellectuals, they are a disappointment. For them the profession of ustadz has been tainted, and considered “low”, the only thing “high” is their popularity rating and life style. Indonesian prominent Shi’ite intellectual Jalaluddin Rakhmat, familiarly called Kang Jalal is cynical about these popular preachers. He finds them lacking in Islamic qualifications, moral integrity and spiritual quality. Unlike real Ulamas, these celebrity ustadz only cater to the wish of the mass media manager and focus their work on entertaining audiences. Acting ability replaces the ability to recite the Qur’an and Hadith fluently. Instead of serving the community, they just mingle with exclusive group in the hope that the glamour rubs off on them. It is no surprise that their followers are easily disappointed, when their “idols” once built up by the media, are later torn down. That risk is part of pop culture. “You can skyrocket in a short time and fade in a flash”, said Kang Jalal (Jalaluddin Rakhmat 1997: 214-216).

## CONCLUSION

When looking at the current celebrity ustadz phenomenon it is probably wise to recall Robert N. Bellah, who noted, “Perhaps the greatest problem of modernization of all for Islam is not it can contribute to political familial, or personal modernization, but whether it can effectively meet specifically religious needs of the modern Muslim peoples” (Bellah 1991: 166). Thus, the wedding of modern life in profane celebrities figure, which is identical to the glamorous life, consumptive, and capitalism with the life figure of *dai* who is sincere, humble, and stay away from publicity has breeding a hybrid entity known as the *dai-celebrities*. In which, they were figures that is not far from the mundane but also close to sanctity. As Andi Faisal termed that “business to preach” not “preaching to business”, this logic was changed by ustadz Zacky Mirza (in his sociable sayings) into: “as a matter of its fees.... everything should be based on its context...as *ikhlas* is care of each other.... When an ustadz is going to preach but without walking, it means that if you go by motorcycle, you also need petrol”.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, in this age of post-modernity, the media technology is proved powerful enough to force change in cultural aspects of humanity, including Islamic civilization. Here the media technology has made the old tradition ethics of *dakwah* is being seriously challenged to respond consumerism motives. With backing from the television industry, celebrity ustadz no longer solely propagate religious piety but also sell their persona as commercial endorser in return for support of their shows. Celebrity ustadzs are not only the ‘creation’ of urban Muslim demand, but thanks to the television and modern gadgets are now a part of the imagination of rural Muslims.

However, some Indonesian Muslim scholars and practitioners of *dakwah*, as described above, look at the phenomenon of celebrity ustadz as contradictory to the normative ethical values that Islam espouses. For them, most of the actions and behaviors of the celebrity ustadz are in principle unethical both in the perspective of conventional *dakwah* ethics and the tradition of Indonesian Ulamas. The main reasons for their views are: *firstly*, as a profession in which there are elements of sanctity and sacral, the *dakwah* cannot be entirely equated with other worldly (profane) professions; *secondly*, in *dakwahtainment*, where the preachers are the actors, the commodification of Islam is

highly striking; and *thirdly*, those ustadzs are often reported on the negative rumors and gossip. They are considered notable to maintain their clerical attitudes.

Due to the power of capitalism and highly competition among television industries, the warrants and suggestions from the 'more' authoritative Muslim group concerning the lifestyle and attitudes of celebrity ustadz are ignored by these ustadzs and naturally the television industry. Ultimately, these Indonesian celebrity ustadzs and their *dakwahtainment* obviously followed Ibn Khaldun's suggestion that *dakwah* should be left to the market. In the logic of market capitalism, observers scholars view culture (cultural studies) that looked down on the hybrid figure of celebrities ustad is not fully applicable. As the low and high culture also depends on the market, that is, from which and whose position the dominant discourse is, it will define its highest or lowest state of the art. Moreover, it is also corroborated that the logic of industrial market capitalism, which sees the demands of the consumer as king is the subject of market engineering and stimulation. In fact, as *dakwah* or propagation also means as popularization of highest Islamic teachings to the commoners, being popular ustadz or *dai* then the rationale and simplest way to get in touch with the people's heart. It is when these two pole of 'populars' (the profane and the sacred) met within celebrities-cult the ustadz-celebrities were born and accepted naturally by the modern mass population.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 For the instant nature of this popular Islamic life-style, see Idi Subandi Ibrahim, *Budaya Populer Sebagai Komunikasi-Dinamika Popscape dan Mediascape di Indonesia Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2007: 147-158).
- 2 These so-called 'Islamic products' such as outfits, cosmetics, herbals, and others ordinary stuffs in our home are interestingly produced not just by Muslim individuals/companies but also by the secular capitalist individuals/companies.
- 3 In fact, there is an impression that the Islamization process is now taking place through television programs, which lead to the interpretation of Salafi-Wahhabist ideology. This *dakwahtainment* program seemingly gives more weight to the *fiqh* messages which are not friendly to the expressions of local Islamic culture or local culture especially. This discourse needs further research.
- 4 See Yunahar Ilyas comments and concerns on the Dai and its *dakwahtainment* in 'Syarat Dai Bisa Tampil di TV:

Wajah Unik, Ganteng, dan Lucu' Rabu, 7 November 2012 at <http://news.fimadani.com/read/2012/11/07/syarat-dai-bisa-tampil-di-tv-wajah-unik-ganteng-dan-lucu/> accessed 12/04/2013

- 5 The charisma quality which is created from the two convergence forces, as Cashmore argues that "[...] religion has borrowed the style of celebrity culture. Its leaders are charismatic tv personalities, its sermons arrive in people's homes via television or the internet, and it elevates its showbusiness devotees into standard bearers. This is part of a convergence. The other part is celebrity culture's ability to supply experiences that, for fans, are every bit as meaningful as religious experiences [...]" see Ellis Cashmore, *Celebrity Culture (Key Ideas)* (Routledge, 2006: 253).
- 6 In fact, people who enjoy the product of *dakwahtainment* are not just Muslim middle class but also the lower class (*wong cilik*).
- 7 Tele-Dai is James B. Hoesterey's term to emphasise the uniqueness of Muslim 'evangelism' and to avoid the perspective of Christian televangelist bias. James B. Hoesterey, 'Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall And Rebranding of AA Gym': 95-112, in Fealy, ed., *Expressing Islam*, see Chapter 6.
- 8 See 'Fenomena Ustadz-ustaz infotainment' at <http://id.omg.yahoo.com/news/fenomena-ustaz-ustaz-infotainment.html>, accessed 12/04/13.
- 9 Al-Buchori died in a motorcycle accident on Friday 26, 2013. At the time of the accident, he was heading home at midnight using his powerful 650cc Kawasaki motorcycle after preaching to a congregation (see Sofjan 2013: 41).
- 10 The blocking time of "Indonesia Bertauhid" Majelis Zikir Syiful Qulub Ciputat Tangerang on JakTV Airtime for Ramadhan event, for example, is Rp. 165,000,000,- for 30 episode in 30 minute/episode) see [www.scribd.com/doc/72651920/Proposal-Jaktv-REVISI-Compatibility-Mode](http://www.scribd.com/doc/72651920/Proposal-Jaktv-REVISI-Compatibility-Mode)
- 11 Artist, here in Indonesian infotainment shows, is a common term for celebrities talents, it could be a singer, actress/actor, comedian and even dai/ustadz. And the term artist is usually denote to actress or female celebrities.
- 12 An exception of this celebrity ustadz is Professor Quraish Shihab. Shihab is also very popular preacher on screen, especially in the study of Tafsir (Quranic Exegesis). Lots of Indonesian Muslims regard him as the real Ulama who is not a part of "ustadz seleb." His preaching is depth, he does not put up tariffs and not surrounded by scandalous gossip.
- 13 For instance *Titian Kalbu* (TV One), *Teropong Iman* (Trans TV), *Assalamualaikum Ustadz* (RCTI (every Wednesday at 4 am), *Cahaya Hati* (ANTV), *Pertalian Hati* (MNC TV), *Indahnya Berbagi* (Alif TV), *Kantin Solmed, Damai IndonesiaKu* (TV One), and *Dai Centre* (part of Uje Centre).
- 14 For more information about his biodata see 'Biography Of Ustadz Solmed at <http://aldyputra.net/2011/08/biography-of-ustadz-solmed/>, accessed 10/04/2013.
- 15 See this dispute in 'Kecewa dengan pengobatan Ustadz Guntur Bumi Cilik -Kesaksian dari Kaskus' at <http://metafisis.wordpress.com/2012/08/04/kecewa-dengan->

- pengobatan-ustadz-guntur-bumi-cilik-kesaksian-dari-kaskus/, accessed 11/04/2013. During February-April 2014, infotainment often reported rumours about Guntur Bumi, for example, regarding his divorce with his wife and complaints from his patients that they had paid large amounts to him but their conditions were not cured. Guntur Bumi was accused of being a cheat by his patients.
- <sup>16</sup> See Ombrill, 'Produser Program Religi: Menyebar Kebaikan di Dunia, Kumpulkan Pahala untuk Akhirat 02 August 2013' at <http://hiburan.kompasiana.com/televisi/2013/08/02/produser-program-religi-menyebar-kebaikan-di-dunia-kumpulkan-pahala-untuk-akhirat-581604.html> accessed 07/12/2013; But many people also criticize that it just chasing the television ratings.
- <sup>17</sup> For the relation of utadz as endorsement product with consumers consumptive behaviours see Iryan Ali Herdiansyah, 'Dai Jadi Bintang Iklan' 29/08/2014 at <http://inventure.co.id/c3000/dai-jadi-bintang-iklan/> accessed 12/09/2014. Indeed, in 1998, an article in *Femina* magazine raised the ethical question whether commercialization of religion in advertisements is appropriate. Dendy Juandi of YLKI (Institute of Indonesian Consumers Foundation) suggested the audiences to be more cautious and aware of the dangers of ads that used religious figures. See 'Komersialisasi Agama dalam Iklan' - Info Kita rubric in *Femina* 10/xxvi. 1998. pp. 5-6. See also Amalia E. Maulana, 'Ustadz seleb: risiko brand endorser,' *Koran SINDO* Rabu, 1 Agustus 2012 at <http://ekbis.sindonews.com/read/662105/39/ustadz-seleb-risiko-brand-endorser; accessed 12/09/2014>.
- <sup>18</sup> Sometime it is known as Dai Center too.
- <sup>19</sup> It stated the qualifications to be an Ustadz /Young Dai: Male \* Age 21 years to 29 Years \* tele-genic or good-looking for national TV \* Graduated from D3 - S-1 Department of Islamic Studies, domestic and/or overseas \* Or Graduated from Pesantren \* Have his own Ta'lim (active in managing dhizkr gatherings) \* Engage in activities and be able to lead Taklim \* have enough on-air experiences as a preacher at the local TV or Regional levels. See 'Peluang Berkarir Menjadi Ustadz Muda di TV Nasional – Tim Ustadz Centre' at <http://azzamudin.wordpress.com/2012/01/11/peluang-berkarir-menjadi-ustadz-muda-di-tv-nasional/>, accessed 12/04/2013. Ustadz Center was under late Uje's management that this paper does not discuss. Greg Fealy has discussed this ustadz in his article in *Expressing Islam* (2008).
- <sup>20</sup> See 'Pendakwah tak boleh pasang tarif' at <http://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/pendakwah-tak-boleh-pasang-tarif.html>, accessed 02/04/2013.
- <sup>21</sup> See 'Komentar Ust. Ahmad Sarwat Soal Ustadz Selebritis' at <http://www.beritabaik.org/2012/04/komentar-ust-ahmad-sarwat-soal-ustadz.html>, accessed 04/04/2013. For Ustad Sarwat facebook see <https://id-id.facebook.com/ustsarwat>
- <sup>22</sup> The subject of the high fees paid to invite these celebrity ustadz, has been the subject of speculation and rumor, but afeit was raised openly in the print media such as *Republika*, it quickly spread in cyber media. One of the web links that talks about this issue is on *Kaskus.co.id*. See 'Mau Tahu Tarif Ustadz-Ustadz Seleb? (masuk gan)' | *Kaskus - The Largest ...* at <http://m.kaskus.co.id/thread/000000000000000015919370/mau-tahu-tarif>, accessed 05/04/2013.
- <sup>23</sup> However, many Muslims also wanted a genuine Islamic media. So these people also used satellite television that they presumed was free from the capitalist involvement. They upload their program on the web such as <http://www.ahsan.tv>, <http://www.yufid.tv>, <http://www.rodja.tv>, <http://www.insantv.com>, and <http://www.ahsan.tv>.
- <sup>24</sup> Even the crowds' on-air stage is a part of setting and acting, as one of the crowd coordinator told the tabloid *Bintang*. See 'Tren penonton Bayaran di Televisi: Antara Alay, Emak Alay, dan Keuntungan Puluhan Juta' at <http://www.tabloidbintang.com/extra/fenomena/14374-tren-penonton-bayaran-di-televisi-antara-alay-emak-alay-dan-keuntungan-puluhan-juta.html>, accessed 20/04/13.
- <sup>25</sup> Piliang discusses low, popular and high cultures at length. For him, the so-called popular culture is low culture, i.e. the culture built by low taste, common, average and vulgar. What Piliang addresses about religious activities in television related to *dakwahainment*, stars (ustadz), fans (umma), self-image, logics of commodity and artificial rites is leading to ustadz figure which is born by television. It is the celebrity ustadz. No doubt, what Piliang means about popular culture at celebrity ustadz is the culture that low and common. Piliang emphasizes this notion in his study ( see Piliang 2011: xxxviii-xlii, 21-24, and 73-74).
- <sup>26</sup> For those preaching are full of humor, please see Youtubes.
- <sup>27</sup> The verse states: "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity" (see Abdullah Yusuf Ali 1968: 149-150).
- <sup>28</sup> The verse says : "Nor should the believers all go forth together. If a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion and admonish the people when they return to them..." (Yusuf Ali 1968: 478).
- <sup>29</sup> The verse states: "Say: no reward do I ask of you, it is (all) in your interest. My reward is only due from God, and He is Witness to all things" (Yusuf Ali 1968: 1148).
- <sup>30</sup> The verse states: "Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves), and who gave themselves received guidance" (Yusuf Ali 1968: 1174).
- <sup>31</sup> On the debates of Juriprudence Ulama on fiqh about the law of accepting payment for dakwah see Harjani Hefni's dissertation entitled *Kajian Tentang Pengupahan Dai Menurut Empat Madzhab* [A Study of Dai Remuneration According to Four Islamic Law Scholars] (Jakarta: Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2008).
- <sup>32</sup> Although it is very common now in Indonesia for the hosts of an event to rewarding the *Qari* (the reader of the Qur'an).
- <sup>33</sup> See 'Ustadz Seleb dan Tarif Dakwah - Ustadz Zacky Mirza: Ceramah Nggak Jalan Kaki, Ada Bensinnya Juga' at <http://hot.detik.com/read/2013/08/19/090714/2333601/230/ustadz-zacky-mirza-ceramah-nggak-jalan-kaki-ada-bensinnya-juga> accessed 13/03/2014

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