P-ISSN : 0853-1692 E-ISSN : 2579-5848
Buletin Al-Turas
website : bit.ly/buletinalturas

Problematizing Contemporary Islamic Discourse: A Conceptual Modeling of New Heroes in Indonesian Islamic Biographical Films

Mochamad Andhy Nurmansyah
Universitas Airlangga
Jawa Timur, Indonesia
m.andhy.nurmansyah-2019@fisip.unair.ac.id

Abstract

Purpose
This study problematizes the interconnectedness between religion and media once again within the context of Indonesian biopics. This paper looks at the pattern of transformation of two Islamic elite-authoritative figures into Islamic-popular heroes that are thematically intertwined with Islamic discourse in Indonesia's reform era.

Method
The research in this article combines several theoretical concepts by examining the relationship between text and context. The social semiotic paradigm of Kress becomes the main theory for disecting the text, while the concept of cultural commodities from Fiske and discourse formation from Foucault become the frame of reference for viewing the relationship between text and context.

Results/findings
The binary modes in those two biopics are not identical, according to this article, but both have transformed the stable concept of historical figures into more complex ones that generate polysemic ideas from an ideological standpoint. This article also explains how the process of meaning formation in the film's two Islamic figures are affected by three entities forming a three-party dialectic model.

Conclusion
In the case of two biopics, Sang Pencerah (2010) and Sang Kiai (2013), this article confirms a dynamic model of conceptual design that connects texts and context. It demonstrates the existence of some variables that contribute to the polarization of contemporary Islam discourses in Indonesia.

Keywords
Islam, discourse, biopic, semiotics, contemporary Indonesia

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038 *Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848*

Abstrak

Tujuan
Telaah dalam artikel ini menyoal kembali keterkaitan antara agama dan media dalam konteks film biografi Indonesia. Artikel ini berusaha untuk menjelaskan pola transformasi dua tokoh elit-otoritatif Islam menjadi pahlawan Islam populer yang secara tematis terkait dengan wacana Islam di era reformasi Indonesia.

Metode
Penenlitian dalam artikel ini memadukan beberapa konsep teoritis untuk melihat hubungan antara teks dan konteks. Paradigma semiotik sosial Kress menjadi teori utama dalam membedah teks, sedangkan konsep komoditas budaya dari Fiske dan konsep formasi wacana dari Foucault menjadi kerangka acuan untuk memahami keterikatan antara teks dan konteks

Hasil/Temuan
Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa mode bineri dalam dua film biopic tidak identik tapi keduanya mengubah konsep stabil tokoh sejarah menjadi lebih kompleks yang melahirkan gagasan bersifat polisemik dari sudut pandang ideologis. Artikel ini juga menjelaskan bahwa proses pembentukan makna dalam film tersebut dipengaruhi tiga entitas yang membentuk model dialektika tri-partit.

Kesimpulan
Dalam kasus dua film biopik Sang Pencerah (2010) dan Sang Kiai (2013), artikel ini menegaskan desain konseptual yang menghubungkan teks dan konteks. Desain konseptual ini menunjukkan rangkaian variabel-variabel yang berkontribusi pada polarisasi wacana Islam kontemporer di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci
Islam, wacana, biopik, semiotika, Indonesia kontemporer

الملخص

الهدف
هذه الدراسة يبحث عن العلاقة بين الدين والإعلام في سياق أفلام ترجمة إندونيسيا. يحاول هذا البحث شرح نمط تحول شخصيتين إسلاميتين من النخبة الإسلامية إلى أبطال إسلاميين شعبيين مرتبطين بشكل موضوعي بالخطاب الإسلامي في عصر الإصلاح الإندونيسي.

الطريقة
يجمع البحث في هذه الدراسة بين عدة مفاهيم نظرية لمعرفة العلاقة بين النص والسياق. و يصبح نموذج السيميائية الاجتماعية لكريس النظرية الرئيسية في تشريح النصوص، بينما يصبح مفهوم فيسك للسلع الثقافية ومفهوم فوكو لتشكيل الخطاب إطارًا مرجعيًا لفهم الارتباط بين النص والسياق.

النتائج
وجد هذا البحث أن الأنماط الثنائية في فيلمي السيرة الذاتية ليست متطابقة ولكن كلاهما يغير المفهوم المستقر للشخصيات التاريخية ليصبح أكثر تعقيدًا مما يولد أفكارًا متعددة المعاني من وجهة نظر أيديولوجية. و تشرح هذه الدراسة أيضًا أن عملية تكوين المعنى في الفيلم تتأثر بثلاثة كيانات تشكل النموذج الجدلي ثلاثي الأجزاء.

الخلاصة
في حالة الكتابتين الحيويتين Sang Pencerah (2010)وSang Kiai (2013)، يؤكد هذ البحث على التصميم المفاهيمي الذي يربط بين النص والسياق. و يُظهر هذا التصميم المفاهيمي سلسلة من المتغيرات التي تساهم في استقطاب الخطاب الإسلامي المعاصر في إندونيسيا.

الكلمات الرئيسية
دين الاسلام، الحوار، فيلم عن السيرة الذاتية، السيميائية، اندونيسيا المعاصرة

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038

INTRODUCTION

Historically in the western context, media and religion were considered two different entities following different paths. The emergence of modernity during the enlightenment era pushed religion into the private sphere, known as secularization. Through the secularization thesis, religion and media were usually construed in conflictual positions, contradicting, weakening even destroying each other. In other words, media and modernity were considered powerful and inevitable agents of secularization (Zito, 2008) which were not in line with the existence of religion or religious doctrines.

Today, media has become an inextricable part of human life in which most communication activities among people are likely to involve media technology. Major media advances have suggested communication types ranging from monomodal to multimodal artifacts. Through time, the power of multimodal media, particularly mass media and popular culture, is not merely limited to assisting people in communication but potentially governing and shaping all forms of social relationships (Strinati, 2004). With the evolution of media technology, people are not autonomous yet are mediated beings (Horsefield, 2008) who rely on media to understand the world they live in, including religion.

Mediatization (Lövheim, 2014) has permeated into a religious domain creating the so-called mass-mediated religion (Morgan, 2014). In Indonesia, one of the manifestations of interconnectedness between religion and media is the emergence of Islamic commercial films. Along with the proliferation of Islamic nuances films in the Indonesian reform era, many studies were carried out by scholars who tried to see how Islamic values were manifested in and mediated through them in various issues, such as film as a terrain of negotiating values (Huda, 2010), or about commodification and Islamization (Sasono, 2010), or about audience's identity formation (Hariyadi, 2013), Islam and gender (Izharuddin, 2017), and Muslim's new wave (Heryanto, 2018). However, specific studies about one of the genres in the production of Islamic films in Indonesia which is known as biography films (biopics) were still relatively few, especially those that tried to comprehend the change of discourses due to different representations of the historical figures in film texts. Biopic films cannot be understood simply as the projectors of specific historical biographies or the fictional creations of the filmmakers. They are in between. Due to this 'in-betweenness', the demarcations of religion and media (Huda, 2010) become blurred and unconvincing. Taking two biopics *Sang Pencerah* (2010) and *Sang Kiai* (2013), this article will try to spell out the complexity of the film texts in formulating ideological perspectives in certain discursive formations. The discussion is aimed to dissect the interconnection between textual and contextual discourse, identify variables included in the discourse construction, and draw a dynamic-potential model of certain discourses.

To do those, this article will analyze binary modes to reveal the potential transformation of Islamic-historical figures in biopics by applying semiotics perspectives in dialogue with Foucault's discourse concept of normality. Then, this article will discuss the position of biopics in the social and industrial context and draw a potential model of discourse construction by extending Fiske's paradigm and Foucault's concepts of discourse formation. Finally, this article will provide a conclusion to highlight the establishment of contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia embodied in the two aforementioned biopics. However, as a conceptual discussion, this article will not be able to explicate thoroughly and solidly the discussion of the text and context relationship since the research is still in progress to fulfill the research project for the doctoral degree

METHOD

The study is conducted within the theoretical framework of semiotics, more specifically social semiotics which places the environment and social interactions as sources, origins or generators of meaning (Kress, 2010). Using the binary concept in semiotics, the unit of analysis drawn from the two Indonesian biopic films mentioned is focused on the

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038 Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848

positioning of the main characters, (KH. Ahmad Dahlan and KH Hasyim Asy'ari) in the story and their interactions with other characters. This study investigates the construction of meaning in the structure of symbolic signs - in the form of film text - conveyed in a social context manifested within the scenes. Furthermore, the social semiotic paradigm will describe the power dynamics involved in the process of making meaning. It is believed that the ideology, values, and interests of anyone involved in the social communication space, in this case between filmmakers and audiences, strongly influence and shape the construction of textual signs used in certain social communication moments to convey meaning. To replenish the research, Fiske's theory (2002) of cultural commodities and Foucault's theory (2002) of discourse formation are used to see the interrelationships of the context outside the film in the formation of meaning through the construction of textual signs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Process of 'Othering', to Deliver Different Heroes

According to Freeman and Smith, one of the characteristics of biopic films is the factuality of the figure being filmed and the centrality of his/her role to the known facts presented in the film. They gave limitation that a biographical film "*may include some fictional characters and some fictional events, but it should make an overall effort to adhere to the known facts and to present its subjects and their careers with some accuracy*". It should also depict how its central character or characters influenced, and responded to, the times and circumstances in which they lived (Freeman & Smith, 2019). Based on the definition, the study of two biopic films, entitled *Sang Pencerah* (2010) and *Sang Kiai* (2013) focuses on their central characters, KH. Ahmad Dahlan and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari. More specifically, the analysis will dissect critically the characters' formation of those two figures in film texts and the potential connection of the formation with the current sociocultural and political dynamic in Indonesia.

KH. Ahmad Dahlan in *Sang Pencerah* (2010) and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in *Sang Kiai* (2013) were two prominent historical figures in Indonesia – both known as the founder of the biggest two Islamic organizations, *Muhammadiyah* (founded in 1912) and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) (founded in 1926) – who were presented in the films as more than just historical Islamic figures. Two of them have been transformed into popular-historical heroes without having to disregard the religious charismatic image possessed by those figures. Thus, this transformation has collapsed the boundaries between the image of unshakeable legitimated authoritative figures and the creation of popular heroes. Mediatized performances of those religiously charismatic figures have opened new dialogues about Islamic discourses. Yet, how do biopics transform the image of those two national figures? The answer is through the concept of 'othering'.

Coined by Spivak, the issue of otherness has been a central concern in post-colonial perspectives. Many experts in post-colonial studies defined 'the Other' differently, including people, concepts, and ideas that challenge the norms and values of 'civilized society' mainly from Western perspectives. This concept is ethnocentric in its orientation and gives more privilege to Western concepts and ideas to set as the normals as stated by Morton, "*the 'Other' is relegated to a place outside of or exterior to the normal, civilized values of western culture*" (Morton, 2003). Adopting and modifying the essential idea of othering, this article will digest semiotically the position of two historical Islamic figures of Indonesia when they were presented inside the biopic screens.

Despite the pervasiveness of conflicting events within the film texts, the main characters in *Sang Pencerah* dan *Sang Kiai* were designed to be 'the Others'. Consistently positioned in a hierarchical conflict, those two historical figures underwent complexities in their textual role as rebel figures. However, the textual interwoven had shown that the formulation of 'the Others' between them did not follow the same path of alignment struc-

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038

Table 1. The Alignment of Binary Modes in *Sang Pencerah* (2010)

Aspects Compared	Dominant Representation	Resistant Representation
Conflicting Characters	Kiai Penghulu Cholil Kamaludiningrat	KH. Ahmad Dahlan
Social Position	Majority/ Society	Minority/ Community
Power Relation	Super-ordinance	Sub-ordinance
Social Relation Performed	Feudalistic	Egalitarian
Social Nature	Traditional	Modern
Ritualistic Nature	Mystical	Rational
Salient Personal Treat	Rigid	Adaptive
Discursive Formation	**Exclusive**	**Inclusive**

Table 2. The Alignment of Binary Modes in *Sang Kiai* (2013)

Aspects Compared	Dominant Representation	Resistant Representation
Conflicting Characters	Japanese and Dutch/NICA	KH. Hasyim Asyari
Social Position	Colonizers	Colonized
Power Relation	Super-ordinance	Sub-ordinance
Social Relation Performed	Feudalistic	Feudalistic-religious
Social Nature	Modern	Traditional
Religious Nature	Non-muslims	Muslim
Salient Personal Treat	Intimidating	Charismatic
Discursive Formation	**Coercing Domination**	**Winning Consent**

tures. The representation of two Kiai, KH. Ahmad Dahlan and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari had been composed of two different binary modes that potentially constructed different kinds of contemporary heroes (Izod, 2001; Fiske, 2002, p. 310). In Table 1 and 2 are two alignment structures of the historical figures being compared.

Historically speaking, two religious charismatic figures, KH. Ahmad Dahlan in *Sang Pencerah* (2010) and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in *Sang Kiai* (2013) were known as two authorities exercising individual control and self-discipline based on Islamic values and norms. Furthermore, the members of *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (henceforth NU) will find those two figures as national figures who contributed to the independence of Indonesia. In short, KH. Ahmad Dahlan and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari were settled on a 'sacred pedestal' at the heart of Indonesian Muslim society due to their various contributions to Islam and the nation at large. However, biopic films had done more with their representations in the film. Those two *Kiai* were not presented simply as religious teachers or national heroes but re-created to be 'rebellious' in different ways.

Although two of them were presented as 'the rebellious Others', the construction of binary modes of the two characters in the biopics had manifested different construction of identities of the so-called *ulama*. Based on the semiotics paradigm, the juxtaposition constituted from the main conflicting characters has provided the audience with two different structural alignments that manifest the representation of KH. Ahmad Dahlan as more critical to the Islam community itself compared to KH. Hasyim Asy'ari. In *Sang Pencerah*,

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038 Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848

the film started with montages focussing on the birth of Muhamad Darwis (later known as KH. Ahmad Dahlan) and showing mystical and superstitious ritual practices. Since his childhood, Muhamad Darwis was depicted to be so curious and critical about those kinds of mystical and superstitious practices done by the society around him. As he grew older, Muhamad Darwis was depicted as having different perspectives on the practices. He tended to question the practices and disagree to follow them. His rejection and disagreement with those practices became a real social issue in Kauman, Jogjakarta when he returned from his five-year pilgrimage to mecca and pointed as *Imam Besar* at the central mosque of Jogyakarta. With more knowledge about Islam, which tended to be more rational and progressive, Muhamad Darwis who had changed his name to Ahmad Dahlan, tried to rectify the surroundings' practices. Unfortunately, his activism was not considered good by 'traditionalist' religious leaders at that time. Everywhere he went, KH. Ahmad Dahlan became the center of attention and was blasphemed as the 'infidel' for teaching and practicing 'different' practices of Islam from the prevailing mainstream. Not only in terms of religious practices, KH. Ahmad Dahlan was also blasphemed, shunned, and even 'excommunicated' due to his idea of promoting an education system for children and youngsters. In short, along with the film's narrative structure, KH. Ahmad Dahlan was pictured and represented as the Other in the circle of the elite Muslims as well as the majority in Kauman at that time.

Meanwhile, in *Sang Kiai*, the film portrayed KH. Hasyim Asy'ari as *Hadratussyaikh*, the *ulama* and leader of Tebuireng Islamic boarding school. Taking the backdrop of the Japanese colonial period, the film depicted KH. Hasyim Asy'ari as an Islamic figure who was persistent in carrying out his religiosity and tough in his resistance toward colonialism. Different from the formation of KH. Ahmad Dahlan who was positioned vis-a-vis with the majority of Muslims, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari opposed colonizers (the Japanese and the Dutch) who imposed foreign values and practices on colonized people that were contradictory to Islamic teachings (shown mainly by Japanese soldiers). Instead of being the Other in the inner circle of Islam itself, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was undergoing rebellious actions against the colonizers. From three important issues portrayed in the film, namely, the issue of *Seikerei*, the establishment of the *Masyumi* organization, and *Jihad* resolution, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari had ensured Islamic discourse as the opposition to colonial discourses and reconfirmed, again and again, his position as the Other completely different from the colonizers.

From the Jacobsonian semiotics perspective, the cinematic alignment of binary modes in table 1, had generated unequal positions between the two poles in conflicts. Under the 'unmarked/marked' concept, the alignment had positioned KP Cholil Kamaludiningrat in the unmarked pole which was considered the norm, and KH. Ahmad Dahlan in the marked pole which was the deviation of the norm/the unmarked. The recurring cinematic patterns emphasized the existence of a hierarchy between the conflictual poles. KH. Ahmad Dahlan and his small group were presented discursively as being the minority, occupying a marginalized and sub-ordinated position as opposed to the majority as a symbol of dominance and super-ordinance. Seen from a social context in the film, the hierarchical patterns provided by the cinematic and narrative landscape in *Sang Pencerah* generated tension between the feudal society, which was firm and established, and the transformative one which was more adaptive to aspects of modernity. The tension was not supposed to be understood as the amplification of mainstreaming dominant ideology yet it was questioning the normality standard owned by the dominant ideology since at the end of the film, the marginalized discourse had received recognition from the dominant religious authorities in Yogjakarta.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault introduced the term 'normalizing judgment' (Foucault, 1995) to describe a disciplinary mechanism. To run the mechanism, five simultaneous activities had to operate, namely comparing, differentiating, hierarchizing, homogenizing, and excluding. However, the formation of a heroic figure, KH. Ahmad Dahlan, in the movie, had shown the failure of the last two processes of normalizing judg-

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038

ment to manifest. Due to this failure, the dominant ideology could not firmly establish the concept of standardizing normality. The dominant ideology was not able to homogenize or exclude 'the deviant' ideology brought by KH. Ahmad Dahlan.

Thus, the discursive formation in *Sang Pencerah* was embodied in the sum of entities composed cinematically to question and break down the dominant religious authorities in Kauman at that time. By contrasting KP Cholil Kamaludiningrat and KH. Ahmad Dahlan, new knowledge was being formed. Through such a discursive formation of exclusivity versus inclusivity, the film has exercised a different game of truth where the former was being shaken by the latter. The discursive formation presented through the transformation of the main character did not immediately pull down the established regime of truth but initiated a strong conceptual perspective to exercise a new regime of truth in Islamic religious practices. KH. Ahmad Dahlan was not only presented as a charismatic Islamic historical figure enjoying certain privileges but more as a contemporary religious hero exercising an alternative discourse in Islamic practices and struggling to gain a better position.

In the meanwhile, the cinematic construction in *Sang Kiai* as schematized in table 2 provided a series of events that were not in line with those manifested in *Sang Pencerah*. The alignment of binary modes between KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and the colonizers did not force the former to be socially and discursively alienated or isolated. The position of being 'the Other' undergone by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was designed to reaffirm the establishment of Islamic traditional institutions. Within the composition of cinematic patterns, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari had been situated as the rebellious figure against the colonials and their 'un-Islamic' policies. However, his rebellions did not make him a deviant. On the contrary, his rebellious actions amplified his charismatic side as a great Islamic leader with his religious steadfastness. Concerning such profile constructions of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, the discursive formation created in the film had coalesced rebellious actions performed by the Kiai into such great energies that form a distinct and charismatic identity to win public consent.

Following the same concept of normality judgment, the cinematic structure presented in *Sang Kiai* successfully implemented five simultaneous activities to establish what was considered normal. The colonizers were arranged discursively to be the 'evil', as mostly recognized by the public. On the contrary, the hero, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was represented as the 'sacred' one. Although the power relation had positioned KH. Hasyim Asy'ari as the sub-ordinant, it does not necessarily position him as the 'marked' one. This structure can be said as the creativity of the filmmakers to construct a new popular hero. Conceptually, the sub-ordinant position displayed symbolically through the existence of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was not intended to make him socially and culturally dominated. Conversely, it was designed to bring out domination. Thus, the standard of normality in *Sang Kiai* rests not in the power relation aspect between the colonizers and the colonized but in the domain of the social and religious nature manifested in traditional Islamic institutions (*pesantren*) and the *hadratussyaikh* KH. Hasyim Asy'ari himself.

The narrative representation through the alignments of binary modes explained above, in conjunction with the question of identity formation of those historical figures impinges on the representation of new heroes in contemporary socio-cultural in Indonesia. Historical discourses about those two figures are shaken and made unstable to create a space for redefining Islamic discourse through biopics. The interesting articulation that emerges from the comparison of the two Islamic figures above is the competing Islamic discourses articulated softly and elegantly through narrative construction. Binaries such as 'modern and traditional', 'minority and majority', 'critical and accommodative, and even 'substream discourses' of Islam and 'mainstream discourses' of Islam seem to be in a dialectical construct within the film productions. In short, the characters in the biopics become the discourse that potentially constructs and is constructed by the socio-cultural and political dynamics in Indonesia.

Gaining its momentum at the beginning of the new millennium, the proliferation of Islamic films, including biopics has been marked by a wide range of discourses produced

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038 *Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848*

by different film communities competing for representations in the public sphere. Here, the 'vanishing' demarcation between popular and legitimated realms of culture as stated by Hoover (Hoover, 2002) seems to be manifested. Two conceptual possibilities, materializing religious doctrines or commodifying religious dogmas, will not be enough to comprehend the existence of two Islamic figures in the biopics. Religion and media have found their meeting point to transform elite figures into more popular heroes in contemporary Indonesia. Those historical figures were neither merely projected onto a screen, nor fictionalized but transformed to establish a particular "hunger for experience" (Carey, 2009) of those historical figures. Therefore, the contemporary 'imagined discourse of Islam' in Indonesia is pluralistic, diffuse, and not easily confined to a certain authoritative power. The imagined discourse of Islam is formed around a range of social and cultural concerns, involving many types of social groups that are not subjected to the mainstream institutionalized discourse. Discussing further the complexity of biopics within the context of broader mediation practices will draw a potential dynamic model of Islamic discourse construction in the case of Indonesian biopics.

The Biopics in Contexts

Biopic production tends to be more challenging in terms of 'fact and fabrication' composition. Freeman and Smith explained further that the truth claim of biopics asks the filmmakers to respect historical accuracy that will fulfill the desire of the audience for the facts and ideas presented in the biopics (Freeman, 2019). However, it will be a mistake to understand biopics to be mere biographies in the form of audio-visual artifacts. Accuracy is part of the elements, but it is not determinant in the whole construction of biopics. There are more rooms to consider in the production of biopics since they can be more 'political' than they are commonly perceived (Heryanto, 2011).

As stated above, biopics set themselves in the 'in between' space of fact and fiction. Though many times, biopics have been scorned due to this incongruous position, it cannot be denied that the power of biopics is derived from the mingling of facts and fiction arranged within the narrative structures. However, it becomes more complicated for biopics when the discussion is focused on historical figures in film texts. The tension between facts and fiction will be elaborated to the tension of past time representation (history, to simplify) and present time (current dynamics).

To minimize the gaps in value between generations of historical figures and generations that consume the biopics, balancing the tension of facts and fiction and past-time records and present dynamics is a must. In general, biopics are not industrial products that are *unhistorical* and *asocial* in terms of their connections to past and present times. They are produced with an awareness of the sociocultural, and political dynamics at two different times. Following Fiske's paradigm, awareness refers to content, industrial, and social values (Fiske, 2002). Therefore, the flow of Indonesian Islamic discourse entering the realm of the 'fluid', industrial media domain through biopics has constantly been renegotiated with full awareness of the socio-cultural and political dynamics of Indonesia. The emergence of heroic-Islamic figures like KH. Ahmad Dahlan and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in biopics must not be framed in isolation from their historical context and the context of production.

In the process of representing and reconstituting the historical-based heroes for the two biopic films above, the filmmakers do not play their roles in a vacuum. In the case of *Sang Pencerah* and *Sang Kiai* movies, filmmakers cannot escape their film texts from the presence of two Islamic mass organizations (Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama) that become the backdrop of the film production. On the other hand, the filmmakers have to neatly knit their creativity (the fabrication/fictional aspects of biopics) and common knowledge (the factual aspects of biopics). Conceptually, these three components have become potential variables in the process of formulating discourse on contemporary Islamic heroes. These three components manifest into three interconnected institutions.

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038

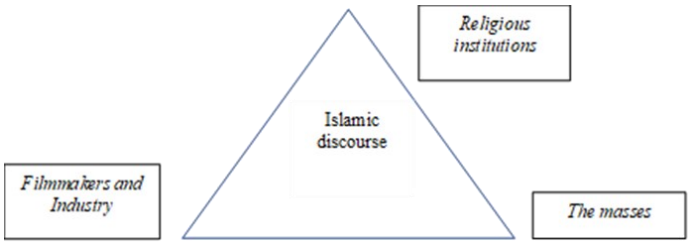

Figure 1. Institutional components of Islamic Biopics

In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault explained that discourse should be understood as a formulation of related statements about a certain notion presented in a certain period (Foucault, 2002). To make it clearer Hall elucidated that discourse is "... *a way of presenting the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment*" (Hall, 1997). Central to their argument is that discourse "functions to make certain ideas and values *present* while others are made *absent*" (Laughey, 2007) in a certain moment of history. Adopting Foucault's argument that none of the subjects is self-governing in the construction of the discourse, in the case of biopics above, is not supposed to be understood as merely the fictional creative work of the institution of film production but synchronization with the other two 'institutions', 'the masses' with their common pieces of knowledge about figures being filmed and the Islamic organizations with their religious orthodox (Turner, 2010), *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (henceforth NU). Each institution contributes to the existence of certain discourses that will give birth to the game of truth for the public to deal with. According to Foucault (2002, 73), 'truth' is centered on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement...; it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption ...; it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation ('ideological struggles)."

The discursive formation of two elite figures into two contemporary heroes must be written by the filmmakers with appropriate 'media language' (Ryan & Kellner, 1988) combined with the awareness of two leading Muslim mass organizations' tradition of thought and the common knowledge and historical facts of the historical figures being filmed. Hanung Bramantya as the director of *Sang Pencerah* as well as Rako Prijanto as the director of *Sang Kiai* and their crew of productions have no absolute power to direct the transformation of the figures being filmed. Therefore, the support given by two institutions, *Muhammadiyah* and *NU* must be 'acquired' to ensure public and industrial acceptability. The audio-visual representation of the two main characters will be justified by the public and will affect the acceptance of the biopics produced. Therefore, biopics are not only captivated by the desire to provide accuracy due to their truth claims or driven merely by the creativity of the makers but also confined to socio-cultural, and political constraints which are institutionalized in the established mass organizations or masses in general. The interconnections of three important discourses from three different institutions can be schematized in figure 2.

In a current mediated era, the religious authoritative holders of Doxa must compro-

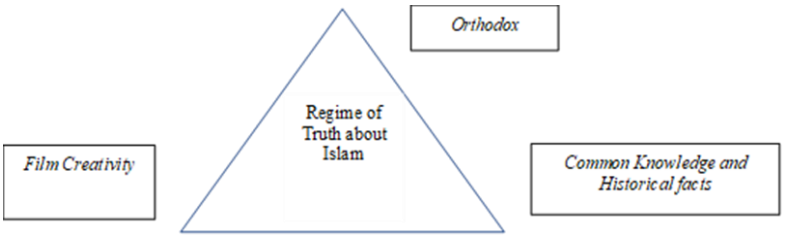

Figure 2. Discursive components of Islamic Biopics

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038 Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848

mise with individuals or groups of individuals who are not 'institutionalized' to design the discourse of Islam to be spread out in the public sphere. The development of information and communication media has made religion and various matters of religiosity become realities that are relatively not free from the complexity and dynamics of the context with many institutions involved. In this mediated reality, de-professionalization of authority (Keskin, 2011) calls it a fragmentation of authority) and de-authorization of religious discourses are very likely to occur (Nurmansyah, 2021). The complexity of film as a medium of communication has to ensure that meanings, pleasures, and social identities can be mingled to meet the 'tastes' of many parties. Therefore, understanding contemporary Indonesian Islamic discourse is to understand a living tradition that means understanding "*how a variety of Muslim groups and individuals relate to it, is to engage with it" (Anjum, 2011)* and seen in the existence of the biopics.

The discourse of the critical agent attached to KH. Ahmad Dahlan indirectly amplifies the representation of *Muhammadiyah* as one of the reformist Islamic organizations in Indonesia (Kersten, 2016). Established in 1912, *Muhammadiyah* has been labeled as a modernist and puritan Islamic organization. Focusing on 'purifying' the practices of Islam among the commoners, enhancing modern education, and providing better health conditions, *Muhammadiyah* is positioned to be more critical nowadays toward mainstream ideologies such as liberalism and secularism. Designed differently, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was presented as a heroic contemporary hero that is authoritative and charismatic. Instead of being critical of the practice of Islam by the commoners, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari tended to be represented as the guardian of the nation with its distinctive Islamic traditions. It seems that the heroic character attached to KH. Hasyim Asy'ari is driven more to reinforce the position of NU as the protector of the country's sovereignty and traditions from various ideological threats, particularly those that are coming from abroad. Established in 1926, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was "*largely in response to the perceived threat to traditional religious practices such as visiting the saint's graves and various other devotional practices that reformist movements represented*" (Bruinessen, 2013).

Finally, the conceptual reasoning why KH. Ahmad Dahlan tended to be actualized as a symbolical agent who was critical of Islam itself and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari tended to be represented as the guardian of the tradition of Islam, could not be simply understood as a matter of industrial needs or creative designs of the filmmakers. Instead, it must be understood as the product of the negotiation of different parties (institutions in Foucault's terms) to create acceptable new contemporary Islamic heroes for dynamic contemporary audiences.

CONCLUSION

The massive role of media in the religious aspect of Indonesian people, including film discourse, is underpinned by the spirit of freedom gained from the collapse of the authoritarian New Order regime. Due to this condition, religious voices become more diverse and flourishing in the public sphere. Mediated Islamic discourse has become the discourse of mass society in which "*there is a loss of exclusiveness of elites*" (Kornhauser, 1959) as manifested in the transformation of historical-Islamic figures into popular heroes. What stated by Hoover in Hoover Clark about the fading of the demarcations of religion and media (Hoover & Clark, 2002), particularly in the aspect of popular and legitimized is reconfirmed through the two analyzed biopics above. Religion and media tend to converge and manifest Islamic populism as other kinds of populism known generally (Barton et al., 2021).

The coexistence of two previously independent entities, religion, and media, stimulates different regimes of truth, regarding Islamic discourse in contemporary Indonesia. Due to this, some points can be highlighted. First, it can be understood that biopics with heroic-Islamic figures might not be simply seen as the process of Islamization of mass media or secularization of religion. The construction of the biopics above has validated that there was a negotiation to produce a certain discourse of Islam that will become the most ap-

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038

propriate articulation to the public at the moment of production. Secondly, the 'appropriation' of the historical-charismatic figures cannot elude the dynamics of external factors, such as social, cultural even political conditions. Third, the 'owner' of religious authority will not become the monopoly of a traditional institution like *Muhammadiyah* or *NU* but it belongs to the socio-cultural dynamics implied in the construction of the textual structure of the films. This does not mean that traditional religious authority has been swept away by the industry, but it is more a process of negotiating and conforming different power blocks to win public consent. At last, to strengthen the conceptual design provided in this article, it is better to work further empirically with other genres within Islamic-nuances films in Indonesia since many other potential variables can be found.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The article is written as a part of a theoretical discussion designed to understand the complexity of new mediated Islamic discourse in Indonesia in the reform era as the project of a doctoral degree in Airlangga University supervised by Prof. Dra. Rachmah Ida, M.Com., Ph.D.

REFERENCES

Anjum, O. (2011). *Has Modernity Ruptured Islamic Political Tradition?*. The Sociology of Islam Secularism, Economy and Politics edited by Tugrul Keskin. pp-54. UK: ITHACA press.

Barton, G., Yilmaz, I., & Morieson, N. (2021). *Religious and Pro-Violence Populism in Indonesia: The Rise and Fall of a Far-Right Islamist Civilisationist Movement*. Religions 2021, 12(6), 397. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060397

Bruinessen, M. V. (2013). *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam Explaining the 'Conservative Turn'*. pp-25. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Carey, J.W. (2009). *Communication as Culture revised edition*. pp-19. New York and London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Fiske, J. (2002). *Television Culture*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (2nd edition translated by Alan Sheridan). New York: Vintage Book.

Foucault, M.: *The Archeology of Knowledge.* London: Routledge (2002)

Freeman, T.S. and Smith, D.L. (2019). *Movies that Exist Merely to Tell Entertaining Lies?*. Biography and History in Film edited by Thomas S. Freeman and David L.Smith. pp-5. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89408-9

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. pp-14. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications Ltd.

Hariyadi. (2013). Finding Islam in Cinema: Islamic Films and the Identity of Indonesian Muslim Youths. *Al-Jami'ah,* 51(2), 443-473. https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2013.512.443-473

Heryanto, A. (2011). Upgraded piety and pleasure: the new middle class and Islam in Indonesian popular culture. In A.N. Weintraub (ed). *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, (pp. 60-82). Routledge.

Heryanto, A. (2018). *Identitas dan Kenikmatan: Politik Budaya Layar Indonesia* (translated by Eric Sasono). Jakarta: KPG.

Hoover, S.M., and Clark, L.S. (2002). *Introduction: The Cultural Construction of Reli-*

© Buletin Al-Turas, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038 Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848

gion in the Media Age. Practicing Religion in the Age of Media edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn S. Clark.New York: Columbia University Press.

Horsfield, P. (2008). *Media*. Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture edited by David Morgan. USA and Canada: Routledge.

Huda, Ahmad Nuril. (2010). Filming Ayat-ayat Cinta: The Making of a Muslim Public Sphere in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 4(1), 43-61.
https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2010.4.1.43-61

Izharuddin, A. (2017). *Gender and Islam in Indonesian Cinema*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.

Izod, J. (2001). *Myth, Mind and the Screen: Understanding the Heroes of our Time.* Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511489464

Kersten, C. (2016). *Islam in Indonesia The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Keskin, T. (2011) The Sociology of Islam. In T. Keskin (ed.). *The sociology of Islam: Secularism, economy and politics* (pp. 1-18). Itacha Press

Kornhauser, W. (1959). *The Politics of Mass Society*. Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Kress, Gunther. (2010). *Multimodality A Social Semiotics Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London and New York: Routledge

Laughey, D. (2007). *Key Themes in Media Theory*. England: McGraw Hill Open University Press.

Lövheim, M. (2014). *Mediatization and Religion*. Mediatization of Communication edited by Knut Lundby. Germany: De Gruyter Mouton.

Morgan, D. (2008). *Introduction. Religion, media, culture: the shape of the field*. Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture edited by David Morgan. USA and Canada: Routledge.

Morton, S. (2003). *Gayatri Chakravorty Spiva*. pp-37. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Nurmansyah, M.A. (2021). Islam dan modernitas: Diskusi Konseptual Fenomena film Islami dan gerakan Islam di Indonesia pada era reformasi. In Y. Fajar, M. Rozin, F. Pujiyanti, A. Asprillia (eds.). *Dari gender, diaspora, hingga budaya populer* (pp. 89-106). Inara Publisher.

Sasono, E. (2010). Islamic-themed Films in Contemporary Indonesia: Commodified Religion or Islamization?. *Asian Cinema*, 21(2), 48-68. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.48_1

Strinati, D. (2004). *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. London: Routledge.

Ryan, M., & Kellner, D. (1988). Camera politica: The politics and ideology of contemporary Hollywood film. Indiana University Press.

Turner, B. S. (2010). Religion in a Post-secular Society. In B.S. Turner (ed.). *The new Blackwell companion to the sociology of religion* (pp. 649-667).

Zito, A. (2008). *Culture*. Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture edited by David Morgan. USA and Canada: Routledge.

© 2023 by Mochamad Andhy Nurmansyah
This work is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License (CC BY SA)

Received (11-02-2023) *Accepted (16-03-2023)* *Published (31-03-2023)*

Print ISSN: 0853-1692 E-ISSN: 2579-5848 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v29i1.31038