

The Polemic of Wayang in Da'wah Stage: Digital Contestation for Religious Authority

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Abstract

Understanding the polemic of wayang in da'wah, which is being discussed in the digital space, has shown how religious authority is contested. Differences in understanding, group background, culture, interests, and ideology have made the dynamics of the contestation more complex. This article discusses the factors that influence the polemic about the use of wayang in da'wah in the digital space and complements the shortcomings of previous studies. This qualitative research uses the content analysis method on online media data and Twitter for one month. The results of this study indicate that the contestation occurs not only in the gripping and traditional authorities but also in the new authorities who are present amid polemics. The media is part of an authority that has its logic, where media users are free to produce and market ideas in the digital space. This condition becomes a new problem that can undermine traditional authority's power and make the world of da'wah a religious contestation arena.

Kata kunci

Panggung
Dakwah,
Kontestasi
Digital,
Otoritas
Keagamaan

Abstrak

Pemahaman atas polemik wayang dalam dakwah yang menjadi perbincangan di ruang digital telah memperlihatkan bagaimana kontestasi otoritas keagamaan tengah terjadi. Perbedaan pemahaman, latar belakang kelompok, budaya dan kepentingan maupun ideologi telah membuat dinamika kontestasi semakin kompleks. Artikel ini membahas mengenai bagaimana faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi polemik penggunaan wayang dalam dakwah di ruang digital serta melengkapi kekurangan kajian-kajian terdahulu. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan metode *content analysis* pada data media *online* dan Twitter selama kurun waktu satu bulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kontestasi terjadi tidak hanya pada pemangku otoritas yang pakem dan tradisional, namun juga pada otoritas baru yang hadir di tengah polemik. Media menjadi bagian dari otoritas yang memiliki logikanya sendiri, di mana pengguna media bebas memproduksi dan memasarkan ide di ruang digital. Kondisi ini menjadi persoalan baru tidak hanya dapat meruntuhkan kekuatan otoritas tradisional, namun juga menjadikan dunia dakwah sebagai ajang kontestasi keagamaan.

Introduction

Using wayang as a medium of da'wah has become problematic for some groups and has become a tightrope. The contestation stage, bolstered by digital media, became a venue for each party to make contentious statements, attitudes, and actions. These

controversial attitudes and actions sparked from personal and group authority contestations in Ustaz Khalid Basalamah's statement and Gus Miftah's video about wayang on the Youtube platform. The polemic of using wayang as a medium of da'wah is not new; differences in understanding the use of customs, culture, and wayang art as a medium of da'wah existed long ago in the Walisongo era (Van Dijk, 1998). The resurgent polemics depict not only theological but also ideological and authoritarian tensions.

Traditional religious authorities are divided on one side, no longer appear as a unified force, and are even under attack from other authorities (Hosen, 2019). Ustaz Khalid Basalamah's statement that wayang is "haram" becomes a polemic that arises in the digital space, describing how authority is challenged. Noorshahril Saat & A. Najib Burhani mentioned that the contestation of authority, both new and traditional authorities, will remain dynamic as digital media evolves to facilitate the contestation (Saat & Burhani, 2020). Furthermore, digital media has not only become a means of staging authority contestation but has also been transformed into authority itself (Turner, 2007); Abdullah, 2017).

The polemic of wayang used in da'wah has been interpreted in various ways (Haryanto, 2015). On the other hand, Da'wah is a component of a religion whose teachings are normative and absolute. Hence, da'wah deals with people who have a vibrant cultural life (Al-Qaradhawi, 2007); Høigilt, 2013). Some groups consider the wayang culture in da'wah to be practical and realistic at that time (Kardiyanto, 2018; A.Hidayatullah, 2019). Walisongo used this method as a medium for spreading Islam which the Javanese people readily accepted at that time (Muna, 2020); Mukti, 2009); (Zuhdi, 2017). Meanwhile, other groups have different views questioning the legitimacy of using this culture as a medium of da'wah. The second opinion puts forward the purification aspect to purify Islam from *nuqtahs* that can contaminate Islamic teachings (Hamdi, 2019; Hafid, 2020; Biyanto, 2010).

The presence of these religious groups aims to challenge traditional religious authorities by introducing an Islamization agenda as a solution to complex economic problems and government policies (Rosidi, 2021). Ustaz Khalid Basalamah's (UKB) statement about the use of illegal wayang has sparked debate, including the emergence of pro and con supporters in the digital space and a rival contest in the form of wayang displays that appear to denigrate UKB, as seen in the digital space. This condition only adds to the suspicion of an increasingly active contestation of authority. As Hidayatullah et al. emphasize, cyberspace has become a battleground between groups due to various productions of ideas, discourses, and issues based on religious, political, and practical sentiments. (M. S. Hidayatullah et al., 2020)

Many studies have been conducted on the polemic of the use of culture in da'wah and contestation life. Several studies on this topic describe how polemics emerge in the relationship between culture and da'wah and contestations from various perspectives. There are perspectives from both the practical and theological

perspectives. In practice, the two are frequently regarded as rivals, with cultural power clashing with religious power, resulting in disharmony. (Mukti, 2008) ; Azhari, 2018; Hamdi, 2019). A further study is related to polemics that describe religious resistance from a theological standpoint. Religion and culture are viewed as two distinct worlds. Cultural resistance in da'wah has been supported by the theological paradigm (Turmudi, 2012; Umar, 2020). Besides, studies on the contestation of religious authority in the digital space are only seen as a subset of the contestation of identity (Mundiri & Tohet, 2018; Haramain et al., 2020), while others examine the contestation of meaning and language (Ahyar & Alfitri, 2019; M. S. Hidayatullah et al., 2020). Based on the preceding studies, it is unclear how the polemic about the use of culture in da'wah occurs in the contestation of authority that uses digital space. This article attempts to relate how authority experiences contestation in the wayang polemic through the use of digital space. In the competition, each party constructs narratives, images, and arguments to influence the public or reject or demean other groups in statements, attitudes, and behavior.

This article aims to complement the shortcomings of previous studies. This article believes that the polemic of using wayang as a medium of da'wah is inextricably linked to the contestation of authority in the digital space. In the wayang polemic, the contestation of authority has become a strategic issue in strengthening or weakening the spread of understanding, views, and influence. Using advances in digital information technology, the polemic that describes the struggle and competition for influence, understanding, and ideology is taking place. In line with that, this article will address two questions: (1) Examines how the polemic of wayang in da'wah occurs in the digital space; (2) examine the factors that occur in the polemic of wayang in da'wah in the digital space. Hence, the results will allow a better understanding of the rationale for the polemics that occurred, which later conclude some reasons for different points of view, both in terms of acceptance and rejection of wayang culture as a medium of da'wah. Wayang polemics demonstrate the increasingly dynamic contestation of authority through differences in viewpoints and actions.

The polemic of wayang culture in da'wah as a contestation of digital space authority is based on the argument that each group has a different foundation and purpose, as well as a different culture that has influenced different discourses, attitudes, and practices. Each party has a foundation for increasing its influence and group network through the creation of ideas, attitudes, and actions that use digital space as a medium for influence building. (Palupi, 2019); Tohari, 2022) The struggle for influence and rejection of different points of view in the content of the wayang polemic also sharpens and opens up the contestation of authority.

In this polemic, some use the media to strengthen ideologies while others use it to attack opposing ideologies. While other groups feel more authoritative because wayang is an inseparable part of Indonesian da'wah's identity and history, it is prone to be disturbed; disturbing wayang means denying history. Meanwhile, other groups see

the polemic as merely a representation of the threat to the existence of a larger nation's culture. Differences in point of view are essential factors that make issues or polemics part of the battle of ideas in strengthening or weakening the authority that is staged in the digital space. As emphasized by M.S. Hidayatullah et al., the struggle for digital space will affect the power of influence, who will control the digital space will hold solid religious authority in the future. (M. S. Hidayatullah et al., 2020)

Method

This qualitative study is based on content analysis from online media, social media, YouTube, and Twitter related to the polemic of using wayang as a medium of da'wah and the implications of the polemic on da'wah life. In qualitative research, content analysis can answer "why" questions and investigate perceptions (McIntosh, 2019). The author encodes several images or videos related to the issue of wayang to describe them with a deeper level of meaning, either symbolically or connotatively, when conducting content analysis.

This study employs a secondary data source in the form of a thick data (McIntosh, 2019) by retrieving conversational data from social media users related to the keyword "wayang" as mapped by SNA (Social Network Analysis) from @NephiLaxmus over some time of 10/2/ 2022 to 28/02/2022, having carried out the crawling process by registering the Twitter API. Following the mapping of the SNA as thick data, the author will supplement or thicken it with rich information from both the historical context and religious studies. In this study, SNA mapping has limitations in reaching all data related to wayang on all social media platforms, raising questions about data representation that can be analyzed. (Lupton, 2014) However, in this study, the "thickening data" process is part of the constructivist paradigm, which recognizes that social phenomena can only be understood through context. (McIntosh, 2019)

Results and Discussion

The Polemic of Wayang as Da'wah Media in the Digital Space

The presence of new media influences the public's ability to freely express their opinions, (Boonen, 2005), including their religious views on an issue. (Ahyar & Alfitri, 2019; Ikhwan & Wafi, 2022; Muttaqin, 2020) Additionally, the presence of the media has become an opportunity for the development of Islamic da'wah around the world, but on the other hand, polemics over religious sentiment have grown stronger, even involving religious authorities (Jinan, 2012). Ustaz Khalid Basalamah (UKB) expressed his views in a 2:23-minute video clip posted on the Yarif TV YouTube channel, sparking the polemic of wayang (Picture 1). UKB responded to a congregational question about wayang law, and then UKB responded to the question.

Questioner: I am Javanese, and I like wayang. Are puppets prohibited, and how does the 'dalang' profession repent?

UKB: Of course, as I've already told all of you, without reducing respect for the traditions and culture of all ethnic groups in Indonesia, we will not talk like in this lecture, not at all; we must know and be aware that we are Muslims. Religion directs this. That is why I believe Islam should be made a tradition and culture, rather than attempting to convert the culture back to Islam. Islamizing this culture is complex because there are so many cultural standards to which one must adhere; later, there will be its characteristics in Indonesia; there is Islam itself, in America, there is Islam, so this is the problem.

God doesn't want that. If it is indeed a relic of our ancestors, maybe we can remember first, oh this is the tradition of the older people like this, but that doesn't mean it has to be done like in Islam it is forbidden, because we are Muslims, we should leave it. Suppose it's a matter of repentance, yes. In that case, repentance is sincere to Allah ta'ala with a repentance that we know to leave past sins and regret promising to Allah not to repeat them, and if he has it, it is better to destroy it, in the sense of the word it is better to remove it.

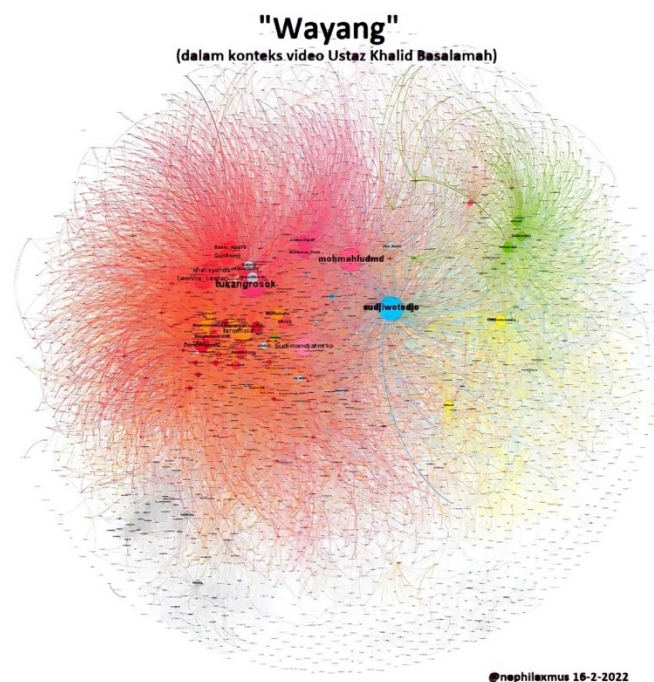
UKB does not explicitly mention *haram* in its explanation; only the words "forbidden," "leave," "repentance," "annihilate," and "eliminate," which are associated with the word "haram" as in the title of the uploaded video (Picture 1). Initially, not many people responded to UKB's views, then it became crowded after @khalisyahda tweeted with narration like Figure 1, to which his followers responded, with a total of 516 Retweets, 1734 likes, and 570 replies. As he said, "I really love wayang. Whether it's a sin or not, I'll handle myself. Though it doesn't bother Ustadz Bermasalah's ancestors. Why do you bother, huh?". The preceding statement explains how Twitter users express their opinions on this particular topic.



Source: Twitter.com/khalisyahda

Figure 1. Screenshot of Tweet @khalisyahda on Twitter

Other actors with a contra tone also showed tweets with a similar narrative, thus triggering the diffusion of the issue of wayang widely on social media and causing the volume of conversations about "wayang" to increase by almost 40 thousand conversation volumes recorded on social media in a reasonably short period. SNA (Social Network Analysis) is needed to see the contestation in the digital space in responding to the issue of wayang (De Brún & McAuliffe, 2018; Gustavo, 2005; Lindgren, 2013; Saura et al., 2017) as a way to capture any actors. People were involved in discussing wayang and how the network in the conversation on social media formed the issue. The keyword wayang spreads in various Twitter social media tweets with accounts from multiple cultural and geographical backgrounds throughout Indonesia. The distribution of the keywords used along with the types of accounts that publish is recorded in the SNA chart in Figure 2 with the context of Ustaz Khalid Basalamah's video.



Source: Social Network Analysis @NephiLaxmus

Figure 2. SNA mapping on Twitter with 'Wayang' keywords

The SNA mapping results (Figure 2) are related to the issue of wayang in the context of the UKB video; there are three clusters with pro, contra, and neutral tones towards this puppet issue. Views are contested in two large groups: the pros and the cons. The contra cluster is distinguished by network clusters on the left that are colored red and orange, whereas the pro clusters are clustered on the right that are colored green and yellow. There are nodes or actors inside these two clusters above who play a significant part in agitating the views of their followers. The SNA map shows that the cons cluster is more remarkable or dominant in the wayang conversation than the pro cluster. UKB's views are considered intolerant, anti-diversity, divisive, newcomers, and do not know history by the contra cluster, whereas the pro cluster believes that the

wayang issue is deliberately raised as a transfer of issues and an attempt to fight each other. Besides, the neutral cluster is marked by a tweet from @sudjiwojtejo, who believes that the issue of wayang is only lively on the surface and makes a little concrete contribution to the preservation of wayang itself. The following is a ranking of the top tone influencers of actors in wayang conversations on Twitter.

Table 1. Top Influencer List

No.	Top Influencer	Tone
Pro		
1	@maspiyuaja	Tere Liye: <i>Wayang 'Haram' Masalahnya Dimana? Babi Haram, Apa Masalahnya? Korupsi Kamu Malah diam</i> (Wayang is 'Prohibited', What's the problem? Pork is prohibited, what's the problem? When it comes to corruption, you stay quiet.
2	@EdiMahaMG	<i>Ini ceramah 2017 yg digunting2 jadi 20 detik oleh BuzzerRP biar sesuai selera dan sampai pesan adudombanya... saya hadir waktu itu di Blok M square, itu pendapat untuk jamaah yang bertanya tidak dimaksud untuk musnahkan wayang keseluruhan, dimana deliknya?</i> (This is a 2017 lecture that was cut into 20 seconds by BuzzerRP so that it suits your taste and delivered the controversial message... I was present at Blok M square, that's the opinion of the congregation who asked the question not meant to destroy the whole wayang, where is the offense)
Cons		
3	@tukangrosok__	<i>Pendatang tdk tahu asal usul sejarah wayang lebih baik diam. Krn kalian hanya hidup numpang dan kalian harus tahu diri jngn coba2 mengusik budaya kami. Kalian akan berhadapan dg kami Pribumi Nusantara.</i> (Immigrants who do not know the historical origin of wayang are better off silent. Because you are just living a hitchhiking and you have to be aware of yourself, don't try to disturb our culture. You will face us the Native from Nusantara)
4	@HASapradan	<i>Ustad2 baru yg bermazhab wahabi seperti Khalid Basalamah dkk merusak keindonesiaan kita. Mereka berusaha berengus kebudayaan kita. Sekarang mereka mengharamkan wayang, Besok2 tari kecak, tari piring, kethoprak dll mereka haramkan. Sobat satu kata buat Khalid Basalamah Libas.</i> (New Ustad2 who are Wahhabi sect like Khalid Basalamah et al are destroying our Indonesianness. They are trying to snort our culture. Now they forbid wayang, tomorrow they will ban the kecak dance, plate dance, kethoprak etc. Guys, one word for

- 5 @Abe_Mukti Khalid Basalamah, Attack!)
Pemahaman Ustadz Khalid Basalamah tentang wayang merupakan pemahaman yang dangkal tentang wayang. Dalam sejarah dakwah islam, wayang merupakan media dakwah yang efektif dan membumi serta diterima semua kalangan (Ustadz Khalid Basalamah's understanding of wayang is a shallow understanding of wayang. In the history of Islamic da'wah, wayang is an effective and down-to-earth propaganda medium and is accepted by all circles)
- 6 @mohmahfudmd *Dulu sy tak pernah nonton wayang. Tp stlh menjadi menhan oleh Gus Dur diajak nonton wayang. Setelah itu terasa ketagihan, nonton terus. Wayang sarat dgn nilai kemanusiaan dan hukum sebab akibat dari perbuatan manusia. Ada ibrah social spt yang diajarkan oleh agama. Halal (I never watched wayang before. But after becoming defense minister, Gus Dur was invited to watch wayang. After that it feels addicted, watch it repeatedly. Wayang are full of human values and the law of cause and effect of human actions. There is a social ibrah as taught by religion. Halal)*
- 7 @sudjiwotejo *Neutral*
“Mbah bangga wayang banyak yang belain?” (“Mbah, are you proud that there are many people defend the wayang?”)
“Malah sedih,” (Instead, I’m sad)
“Kok?” (How come?)
“Sebab bagi mereka mungkin yang penting gaduh, bukan ngebela wayang. Nonton wayang aja mungkin ga pernah. Apalagi nanggap wayang. Tanpa dimusnahkan, wayang akan musnah sendiri kalau gak ada lg yg nonton/nanggap” (“Because for them maybe the important thing is to be noisy, not to defend wayang. They maybe never watch the wayang. Especially when it comes to puppets. Without being destroyed, the wayang will be destroyed by itself if no one else is watching/perceiving it.”)

Source: Research results

There are actors on the list of top influencers (Table 1), with user @Abe Mukti as a representative of Muhammadiyah who expressed his views on the "wayang haram" polemic. In his tweet, Abe Mukti stated that UKB's understanding of wayang was shallow, explaining that throughout the history of Islamic da'wah, wayang was an effective da'wah medium accepted by all. Additionally, @mohmahfudmd, a representative from the NU community, did not specifically explain his position on the

polemic of "illegal wayang," instead of highlighting his interest in wayang, which is full of human values that are compatible with religious values. Aside from @Abe Mukti and @mohmahfudmd, few actors represent ideological authorities or their views on wayang in an attempt to counter UKB's views on social media platforms such as Twitter. Instead, the public debate about wayang takes place, which is not authoritative. This condition demonstrates that the media is a medium for other authorities (other than religious authorities) who have the power of followers and narrative power to influence the public to participate in discussions about wayang in religious and cultural contexts. (Saat & Burhani, 2020)

Apart from the public's participation made possible by new media, the contestation over the wayang issue has intensified (Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram). The meeting of two opposing ideological currents and religious views is another factor that strengthens authority contestation, particularly in response to the issue of wayang. Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah are two well-established and authoritative religious organizations in Indonesia. Following the reform period, the presence of the transnational movement poses a threat to the survival of the two organizations. (Akmaliah, 2020) The escalation of the wayang issue elicited a response from the two major mass organizations, who regretted the UKB's position that wayang was illegal. Thus, this triggered NU figures/actors such as Gus Miftah to react by considering the puppets at his Islamic boarding school as counter-narratives from UKB in Figure 4.



Source: Youtube Channel of Gus Miftah Official

Figure 4. Wayang Performance's Video Post

Gus Miftah's wayang performance was titled "Live Wayang Kulit with Ki Warseno Slank & Gus Miftah" and was posted to the Gus Miftah Official YouTube channel. The public concluded during the wayang performance that GM purposefully bullied a wayang (puppet) with a hat and beard who was beaten up in a war scene, then the *dalang* (puppeteer) stood up and slammed the puppet while saying the following words.

Mbok ki cangkemmu cangkem opo cok. Yen 9o era seneng wayang ra sah kakehan cangkem koe. (What do you mean, huh? If you don't like Wayang, don't be such a big mouth.)

The majority of the public regretted the wayang performance, because it was deemed to have worsened the situation and actually showed the quality of an ustaz who was unable to understand the context of UKB's statement. However, Gus Miftah (GM) clarified that he only considered the wayang performance, while the storyline was the authority of the puppeteer, GM denied that the wayang performance was a response from UKB's point of view. Apart from GM, there are other NU figures such as the Chairman of the Tanfidiyah Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board Ahmad Fahrurrozi (AF) who stated that the presence of wayang was used as a medium of da'wah by Islamic leaders. In line with AF's opinion, a similar opinion was expressed by Ishfah Abdul Aziz, the Chairman of PBNU who revealed that wayang is like hadroh "For example hadroh activities. Hadroh are cultural activities. Hadroh, gambus, all of them. It's the same. It's an activity. culture. If we then include it in it, we fill it with Islamic content and content, no problem. It doesn't matter. The same response emerged from Muhammadiyah circles, through a tweet by Abdul Mu'ti (General Secretary of PP Muhammadiyah) who stated that UKB's view considered superficial, he explained that in Islamic history, wayang was an effective propaganda medium and was accepted by all Muslim circles.

The reactions of the two mass organizations to UKB's view further reinforce that the Internet and Social Media are new arenas for traditional authorities to expand the idea of diversity with new authorities. According to Saat & Burhani, 2020 there are three factors behind the strengthening of the current contestation of authority in the three religious' arenas of Muslims in Indonesia: globalization, democratization after the 1998 reformation, and the growth of private TV users and social media users. These three factors have a strong impact in shaping and animating the construction, contestation and fragmentation among internal Muslims in Indonesia. Thus, every issue of differing views on fiqh, fatwas that should be resolved in an authoritative religious arena, the presence of social media expands the arena with public participation in debates.

The Relationship between Da'wah and Culture in Indonesia: Accommodation and Resistance

The relationship between Da'wah and culture is considered by some to be like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated in the process and life of da'wah in Indonesia (Zuhdi, 2017). Since Islam entered and developed in Indonesian territory, da'wah has been carried out through a cultural approach by traders and Sufis. (Ali, Fachri and Effendy, 1986) local culture as a medium of da'wah, including Sunan Kalijaga and Sunan Kudus. The two Walis are known to be very accommodating to local culture and use it as part of a da'wah strategy so that the community easily accepts da'wah. Da'wah through arts, songs, wayang, and ruwatan traditions that have been changed with Islamic values become an essential part that is familiarly used in their da'wah process. (A. Hidayatullah, 2021); (Solikin et al., 2013) The helpful attitude

towards culture is not only to facilitate the acceptance of da'wah by the community but also to facilitate the passage of da'wah in a society that still holds tightly to tradition. (Mujib, 2020) Even to avoid conflict and confrontation with local culture, Sunan Kudus, for example, forbids the slaughter of cows, which are animals that the followers of Hindu Kudus highly respect. (Van Dijk, 1998) It turns out that not all Walis have the same attitude towards accepting local traditions in da'wah. Sunan Giri, for example, who is also known as the "white line group" in Van Dijk's terms, chose not to do this, which he saw was not recommended in the Shari'ah. (Van Dijk, 1998)

The cultural adoption that occurred in the process of spreading Islam in Indonesia made Islam that developed in Indonesia have a distinctive style. (Madjid, 1987) Local culture is allowed to live and grow in the community along with the development of Islam itself. Even the breath of Islam has penetrated the nation's culture, which has inherited the values of spirituality and morality. (Abdullah A. M, 1996) The da'wah process carried out with a cultural approach has advantages in terms of ease and acceptance by the community. Still, it has also formed the distinctive character of the development of Islam in Indonesia.

The uniqueness of Indonesian Islam, which is considered syncretic is not only because it is far from its Arab country of origin but also has mixed with local traditions and the traditions of Indian and Persian merchant communities who spread Islam in Indonesia. However, the mixing is not on aspects of the central teachings in Islam. ,(Ali, Fachri and Effendy, 1986) The development of Indonesian Islam, which was seen as contaminated with local customs and culture, later sparked the birth of the Islamic purification movement by scholars who had returned to study from the Arabian Peninsula. (Van Bruinessen, 1999) The Islamic purification movement was carried out by scholars in various regional settings, such as Haji Poor, Datuk Nan Rentjeh in Sumatra, and KH. Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta. The purification movement in the country cannot be separated from the renewal movement that occurred in the Arab world. (Van Bruinessen, 1999)

The movement made by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, through the Muhammadiyah organization is known for the progressive Islamic movement and the purification of Islam. The TB eradication movement (takhayyul, Bid'ah, and Khurafat), which had taken root in the community at that time, became one of the features of Muhammadiyah's da'wah. (Burhani, 2019). Although Muhammadiyah carries out a purification movement for certain aspects; it is different from the purification movement of the Salafi group. Muhammadiyah, in certain aspects, is accommodating to local culture as a da'wah strategy. Muhammadiyah, since 2002 has promoted the cultural da'wah movement as a strategy. (Biyanto, 2010) The use of wayang as part of art in da'wah is not a problem for Muhammadiyah circles. Even the General Chairperson of the Muhammadiyah Central management, Haedar Nashir emphasized that Muhammadiyah was not anti-culture. He emphasized this when he opened the shadow

puppet show in Bantul on May 20, 2017. As also exemplified by the figure of the founder KH. Ahmad Dahlan who often watches wayang performances and also other cultures such as the gerebeg pasa ceremony, large gerebeg, gerebeg mulud. Cultural Performances as an effective medium in the delivery of Islamic da'wah (Bahri, 2022). Based on the results of the 1995 Muhammadiyah Congress, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council decided that arts and culture were considered permissible as long as they did not contain a facade; damage, *dharar*; danger, *isyyan*; disobedience, and *baid 'anillah*; away from God.

The da'wah movement based on local culture and customs is getting stronger in the da'wah tradition carried by Nahdhatul Ulama (NU). The largest Islamic organization in Indonesia founded by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari is known as a traditionalist group. (Nakamura & Kafrawi, 1995) Traditionalism is pinned to Nahdhatul Ulama because what it strives for involves the concept of the tradition of the ulama as heirs of the Prophets. (Fealy, 1997) As heirs to the Prophets, the ulama have a central position both in religious thought and practice, which refers to the Qur'an, Hadith and the thoughts of the scholars through the compulsory study of classical books that have become a tradition in Islamic boarding schools. Nahdhatul Ulama fights for the tradition of the ulama with the slogan *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah* "ASWAJA" (Van Bruinessen, 1996).

The struggle for traditionalism is also closely related to the closeness of the Nahdhatul Ulama movement to local traditions that have become the traditions of their ancestors that have been adapted to Islamic values. (Van Bruinessen, 1996) The traditions and culture of the community are an important concern in the Nahdhatul Ulama da'wah as was done by the previous Wali. Nahdhatul Ulama introduced itself as a continuation of Walisongo's da'wah where the da'wah method carried out by Nahdhatul Ulama was very accommodating to the traditions, customs and culture of the community. (Razi, 2011) The struggle and defense of the followers of Nahdhatul Ulama against the existence of cultural da'wah has made the NU group at the forefront of attacks by revivalist groups and puritan groups who reject tradition. (Turmudi, 2012) Puritan groups who struggle to purify Islamic teachings from nuqtahs that tarnish the purity of Islamic teachings are carried out by the Wahhabi Salafi group. This conservative movement founded by Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab from Saudi Arabia is now developing in Indonesia. (Abidin, 2015)

The followers of Wahhabism massively spread this ideology in all corners of the country. Previously, only their thoughts were adopted, but now they are experiencing a real diaspora in the form of groups acting on behalf of the Salafi group and spreading Wahhabi ideology. This group spreads religious thoughts and practices through recitations, whether carried out through sermons in mosques, studies, or *taklim* assemblies. It is also aggressively carrying out da'wah through electronic media such as television, and radio, which this group owns (Wahid & Makruf, 2017). Similarly, da'wah through digital media Youtube, Instagram, and others.

Traditional Authority: Contest and Competition

Authority is the holder over teachings, fatwas, and explanations as well as religious leadership that gets public recognition and support. *Ulama, Kyai, Mufti, and Qadhi* are among the authorities in Islam. (Turner, 2007) While the Islamic Authority itself is sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith which incidentally is written in Arabic. An authority holder is a person who is considered to have reached a stage close to the source. The scientific aspect is a prerequisite for authority which is also supported by experience in leadership and the ability to solve religious problems that are trusted and supported by the public. Authority in Islam is open which can be done by anyone who is deemed capable of carrying out the process.

Recognition of the people is an important capital in the prerequisites for authority holders. Authority in Islam is local, so it is equal and not hierarchical. In contrast to the authority in Christianity which is centered on the central figure of the Pope. (Turner, 2007) Within the framework of exercising their authority in the transformation of Islamic scholarship, traditional authority holders develop it through institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, madrasas and related institutions that specifically prepare the baton holders of religious authority in society. Pesantren and Madrasas and the like are seen as traditionally authoritative institutions. Traditional authorities that have been rooted in the history of people's lives are now starting to be threatened along with the progress and development of media technology. (Hosen, 2019)

Religious authority is not only associated with the prerequisites for mastering religious scholarship but is also associated with the practical practice of understanding the Qur'an in everyday life, as done by KH. Ahmad Dahlan through the Muhammadiyah movement, one of the authoritative religious institutions in Indonesia. (Kim, 2010) Moreover, it is not enough for the authority holder to master Islamic and practical knowledge without paying attention to public recognition as emphasized by B.S Turner above. (Turner, 2007) In the Indonesian context, traditional and local authority holders are socialized or supported and recognized by the community in local terms. The track record and public trust are important points in building authority. So that not all who are experts in the mastery of Islamic knowledge are believed to be the holders of authority in society.

Community trust and support are the capital for the sustainability of an authority. It is not uncommon for people to reject the presence of figures who are seen as authoritative in other places but are rejected in other places because they are considered different. Even small differences are often a factor in the collapse of authority in the eyes of the public, such as differences in understanding, differences in Madhab, and differences in customs and traditions. Especially when it puts forward counter-productive narratives, insults, and insults like what is done by certain groups against other groups. So it is not surprising that differences, friction, and even rejection and competition between traditional authority holders and religious groups often arise,

one of which is between the Nahdhatul Ulama and Salafi groups. (Ulum, 2016); (Masitah, 2021) The salafi group, which is one of the transnational religious groups, is now developing openly in the country, especially since the Reformation Order. This new group began to take advantage of opportunities at various opportunities and began to gain the stage. The media stage, both print media, electronic media and also new internet-based media are the fields of da'wah, in addition to recitations in office mosques, taklim councils and also Islamic studies on campuses. (Arifianto, 2020) In fact, this group is often labeled as a propagator of radical ideas that threaten local religious understanding as well as national political stability. (Redjosari, 2019)

As a propagator of Wahhabi religious beliefs that are rigid and anti-tradition and culture, this group often faces challenges and rejections from other groups. Therefore, even though Salafis have control over authoritative, pure and original Islamic sources originating from the world's Islamic axis, namely Saudi Arabia, the Wahhabi teachings that they develop are seen as incompatible with the culture of Indonesian Muslims. The Salafi-Wahabi da'wah movement is considered to have the potential to deculturalize Indonesian Islam which is uniquely Indonesian which has been built by previous scholars. So that the presence of this group is often considered a threat to the continuity of a peaceful and harmonious life. (Hamid, 2016); (Hasan, 2018).

The presence of Salafi groups with conservative and radical da'wah movements is considered by many to be a threat, not only threatening the established mainstream authorities, but also threatening the tradition of moderate da'wah which is typical in Indonesia. The da'wah tradition is not only accommodating to the traditions and culture of its diverse society, but also makes culture a strength of relations in building harmony between groups. Group da'wah movements like this have reduced mutual respect, openness and *tepo seliro*, and respect for differences that have been built so far. (Jubba et al., 2021) The collapse of mutual respect and internal tolerance of the people began to crumble. The fragility of internal relations is not only caused by differences in understanding, but also the struggle for influence. As stated by Din Wahid, that the presence of this group is not only considered to disturb mainstream religious life, but also to be a threat that can shift the power of mainstream Islam. (Wahid, 2012) Competition between authorities colors the contestation stage in the digital space. The da'wah competition, which has always been in contact with external groups, as mentioned by J.Meulemen (Meuleman, 2011) is now happening within the internal community through the spread of ideology, understanding and influence of the group in society.

Contest and Shift of Religious Authority in the Digital Age

The digital era is a time and condition that is based on the advancement of media that facilitates all information needs and various aspects of human life based on the internet. The digital era is a dynamic era both in terms of content and its relationship with users who are increasingly easy through digital devices. (Manovich, 2002) Digital

media is not only a source of information, but also a fulfillment of various aspects of human life. Religious issues are no exception to be a dish that is produced and served openly according to options and taste. As Aguilar emphasized, digital media is a source that presents religion in its various dimensions and variants. (Aguilar et al., 2017) Digital media has become an important instrument in the distribution of information, instilling value and even influence. No doubt all of them are competing, including cyber Islam, in fighting over the public space through the control of the media which gives birth to contestation in the public space. The contestation is not only motivated by religious and ideological, primordial, practical and political sentiments as stated by Hidayatullah et al, but also becomes a battleground for the influence and sustainability of the group. Therefore, mastery of digital media will determine the future face of Indonesian Islam. (M. S. Hidayatullah et al., 2020)

Digital media is no longer just a tool, but also has logic and authority that can no longer be controlled by other forces, including religion and politics. (Turner, 2007) The media has the authority to control its users through presentation, features, language and even meaning. The power of the media has changed how authority and charisma are inherent as sources of legitimacy and trust and compliance but also lawsuits. (I. Abdullah et al., 2019) Religious authority which has been owned by certain circles as an elite group in the community structure as a source of reference, is no longer the sole reference. In fact, everyone has become a producer, including in religious matters. No wonder there is a satire that the Internet seems to have made everyone like a mufti who gives fatwas on the problems of human life.

The evolution of religiosity supported by the advancement of new media provides an open space for the expression of religiosity and the claims of authority built by the media. The media not only gave birth to a new jurisdiction in religion that was increasingly divided but also the press became part of the authority itself (Turner, 2007); (I. A. I. Abdullah, 2017). On the same assumption, the logic of the media shows that religious authorities are starting to divide on the one hand facing each other to compete for the influence and power of their authority in the public sphere in various interesting ways and in accordance with the logic of the media, as mentioned by Manovich where the logic of the media is based on markets and entertainment. (Manovich, 2002)

The logic of the media which has become an authority has shifted religion and da'wah which were previously a source of obedience after being mediated. Among these shifts, according to Irwan Abdullah, a religion that is trapped in the logic of the media which has its own ideological burden, changes religion in the media to become deterministic, not participatory and contestation. (I. A. I. Abdullah, 2017) Mediated religion and da'wah not only give birth to obedience, but also criticism and even rejection. Religious figures or preachers who are sources of legitimacy and receive high respect in the community, after entering the media, not only get worshipers but also blasphemers, not only followed but also bullied, not only getting followers but also

haters. Figures and authorities in the digital space have experienced many shifts, both shifts from the scientific aspect and institutional basis, as well as shifts from the public as the basis of trust. Public trust is no longer bound by the primordialism of figures, nor institutions, but also by sentiments on content, narratives, language, and meanings that are formulated through the media. The case of the issue of blasphemy by Ahok in 2016 which had implications for social, religious, and political life as well as the polarization of the people started from the language and meaning of media narratives. (Ahyar & Alfitri, 2019).

Likewise in the case of the wayang polemic, although it is not as strong as the polemic on blasphemy which is very sensitive, it has illustrated how the content, language, and meaning formulated by the media have given rise to feuds and bullying of religious leaders-Ustaz in the digital space. Each party presents arguments, opinions, as well as ideas, images, and narrations related to wayang in da'wah to strengthen their authority or weaken the authority of others. Within the framework of strengthening authority, the stage of da'wah is not only a means of inviting people to the religion of Allah, inviting goodness, and preventing evil as ordered by the Qur'an (Q.S. 3: 104; 110). Now media da'wah is also a means of spreading understanding, ideology, and being part of propaganda. (Hew, 2018); Karim & Wajdi, 2019) Ideological propaganda, manhaj, sects, and understandings that are staged often regard other groups or other understandings as "the Other". (Mundiri & Tohet, 2018) The contestation of authority in the wayang polemic does not only occur between contestants of religious authority, both old and new, but also between media authorities and user authorities. As mentioned by Irwan Abdullah, users have the power and freedom to produce religious narratives and spread them in an increasingly open and contested digital space. The media has given legitimacy to the public to absorb the meaning and produce ideas, as well as reject ideas and discourses including religious content and context. (I. A. I. Abdullah, 2017)

Conclusion

The polemic of wayang in da'wah is actually not a new issue, long before in the early days the use of wayang as part of the local tradition and culture used in da'wah has occurred. It's just that what distinguishes the era in which polemics are carried out by authoritative people or figures, especially on religious issues. Now in the era of digitalization of information, ideas, discourses and even religious content and contexts are mediated, not only authoritative figures who have polemics, but all net citizens (netizens) have an open space for polemics. The view that the internet has made everyone a mufti has been proven. Digital media not only displays how information is disseminated, distributed, but also provides an open space for the public to interpret language and even produce ideas and ideas. Media authorities and public authorities on the one hand not only threaten the power of traditional authorities but can also give birth to authoritarian attitudes. If media freedom exists without restrictions and value controls, it will make truth and error difficult to distinguish. Media authoritarianism that

cannot be limited by other authorities, including religious and political authorities, shows that the media has destructed the power and influence of traditional authorities. Threats to traditional authorities are not only the birth of new authorities in the form figures or groups or new sects but also public freedom in producing ideas and meanings of wild religious content and contexts, which can become "terror" for the sustainability of mainstream - traditional authorities.

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