# ORATORICAL INNOVATION AND AUDIENCE HETEROGENEITY IN ISLAMIC WEST JAVA

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Recent writing about Islamic orators in Indonesia has highlighted an important if rather obvious aspect of their activity: social change creates audiences in new combinations with diverse needs for religious mediations by preachers with competencies that match the audiences' novel preferences and requirements. James Hoesterey, for example, has highlighted the "innovative claims to religious authority" of the Bandung-based orator Aa Gym. The mediation of religious authority in Indonesia has conventionally been the domain of people formally trained primarily in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), and against this background Aa Gym has appeared as a new type of celebrity preacher who signifies a shift away from that tradition.[1] In her writings about novel articulations of Sufism in Indonesia, Julia Day Howell has noted a growing urban audience for Sufism that recognizes "televangelists and professors" as credible religious mediators, despite their lack of formal religious qualifications. These "new-media," "entertainer-preachers" break the mold of the classic or old-style religious scholar (ulama).[2] Akh Muzzaki has noted the rising public demand for sermons by Surabaya's university-based preachers, a class of expert mediators he contrasts with the leaders based in East Java's traditional pesantren. By responding to changes in the "preacher's social landscape," the campus-based preachers break from

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[1] James Hoesterey, "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall, and Rebranding of Aa Gym," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), pp. 95–112.

[2] Julia Day Howell, "Modulations of Active Piety: Professors and Televangelists as Promoters of Indonesian 'Sufisme,'" in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, pp. 40–62.

traditional modes of oratorical mediation of Islam.[3] These writings emphasize three points in common: the dynamic creation and recreation of audiences for Islam in Indonesia, the novel competencies that have arisen among preachers to make the mediations acceptable to these new audiences, and the ongoing, compelling grip of the *kyai* (*pesantren* leader) as the archetypal image of religious authority in Islamic life, including in the field of oratory.

Having recently completed a three-year research project about Islamic oratory in West Java (2007–11),[4] I concur with these researchers' identification of preachers' emerging competencies as responses to social change. But their observations also lead to other questions about the practice of Islamic oratory that are at risk of being obscured by the novelty of the mediators on whom they focus. The research mentioned above dwells on the highest-profile manifestations of innovative preaching. Preachers such as Aa Gym, Arifin Ilham, Yusuf Mansur, and Jefry Al-Buchori have attracted attention for their undeniable novelty, something inseparable from their prominence in emerging media networks and the national celebrity system. But it is a mistake to think that sophisticated urbanites and users of modern media are the only audiences for oratorical innovation. In Bandung, I found that a sensitivity to cultural change and a willingness to develop performance strategies in response to it are necessary capabilities even for those mediators who style themselves on the model of the traditional *kyai*, and who find their core audience at preaching events held in villages— the social context that appears most clearly as a continuation of Indonesian pasts.

My argument here is that oratory taking place *across the social spectrum* succeeds as a medium for Islamic participation because orators are willing and free to shape their mediations in accordance with cultural particulars of their audiences and preaching contexts. The orators' dynamic responses to cultural particularism constitute a general aspect of preaching that boosts its participation levels. I support this argument by contrasting preaching styles in two settings: first, in life-cycle and calendrical celebrations held in West Javanese villages, and, second, in bureaucratic workplaces. The former setting shows continuity with the past, while the second was, during the 1980s, a relatively novel context for preaching. In both settings, preaching performances are successful when preachers engage with the cultural particularisms of their audiences in their contemporary forms.

This tendency to diversity does not prevail across all Muslim-majority societies. Oratory is a relatively unregulated field of activity in post-Suharto Indonesia, something that cannot be said of other Islamic countries, such as Malaysia and Egypt.[5]

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[3] Akh Muzakki, "Islam as a Symbolic Commodity: Transmitting and Consuming Islam through Public Sermons in Indonesia," in *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, ed. Pattana Kitiarsa (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 205–19; quoted phrase from p. 206.

[4] The research out of which this writing emerges was sponsored by the Australian Research Council's Discovery Grant program. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of all those who helped in this research, including Professor Dr. Dadang Kahmad, Professor Dr. Miftah Farid, K. H. Jujun Junaedi, H. Zainul 'Abidin, Mr. Dede Syarif, Professor Dr. Asep Saepul Muhtadi, Mr. Agus Ahmad Safe'i, Mr. Hawe Setiawan, and the staff of the Bandung PDAM (Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum).

[5] About the regulation of preaching in Egypt, see Patrick Gaffney, *The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic counterpublics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006). For Malaysia, see Patricia A. Martinez, "The Islamic State or the State of Islam in Malaysia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23,3 (2001): 474–503.

Simply put, in Indonesia, anybody whose talents and competencies are accepted by audiences can find success as a *muballigh* (preacher). When the field of preaching in Indonesia is surveyed, one finds that the range of acceptable talents and competencies is very broad, reflecting the freedom of the country's *muballigh* to anticipate the needs, preferences, and likes of their audiences and patrons, and to produce performances appropriate to them. The range of preaching styles is almost as wide as the nation's cultural variety.

But the distinction between innovation and continuity arising from the writings cited in my opening paragraphs is nevertheless important. Although I argue that innovation is not limited to orators who prominently resonate with recent social change and respond to media innovation, the contrast between what we may loosely label "contemporary" and "traditional" orators is an important one that requires attention. This would not be a helpful analysis if it addressed their respective responses to cultural particularism in the same breath. So, following my comparison of the two preaching styles, I provide an analysis of the ideological dispositions towards oratory revealed in Indonesian Islamic discourse. These dispositions treat the two examples differently, locating them at different stages in what Keane and others have described as "the narrative of modernity."[6]

The bulk of the article consists of analyses of two preachers who achieve successful preaching outcomes in the two selected settings. Before turning to those, however, an initial qualification is provided, namely, that these arguments apply only to preaching delivered before heterogeneous audiences as opposed to those audiences formed around specific religious or religio-political programs. Following this qualification, I then discuss two exemplary Sundanese preachers: E. Z. Muttaqien (1925–1985), a preacher who achieved great success in preaching in novel, urban contexts; and Ajengan Al-Jauhari (b. 1971, not his real name), who has continued to present himself as a preacher in the "traditional" mold. In the final section, I extend this comparison by exploring the distance between the preaching encountered in these two settings. I argue that they are distinguished in contrasting ideological dispositions to oratorical performance, and in diverse perceptions of proper Islamic subjectivities.

## Heterogeneity

Audience heterogeneity emerges through two variables: cultural competency and religious preference. Some West Java audiences display significant variety in cultural knowledge due to, for example, the great difference in ages among members and their contrasting familiarity with contemporary media. West Java's young people identify with the languages, language varieties, performance genres, media, and cultural iconographies emanating from Jakarta, which provide windows into a culture of (urban) modernity beyond the comprehension and experience of older people. The variants of the national language (Indonesian) used in youth culture will be largely incomprehensible to older people.[7] This linguistic and cultural diversity presents a

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[6] Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007).

[7] See J. Joseph Errington, *Shifting Languages: Interaction and Identity in Javanese Indonesia* (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 16–27.

problem for a preacher addressing an audience containing old and young people, which is often the case for life-cycle and calendrical celebrations. The preacher faces the challenge of identifying cultural references and strategies that are recognized across the cultural borders within the audience, or at least will not exclude too many of its members.

Religious orientation is another point of difference. West Javanese Islamic society includes many Islamic constituencies marked by differing subjectivities, positions, and outlooks.[8] The village communities that make up much of the area of Bandung, for example, will include *santri* (students of Islamic sciences), for whom scriptural authority is a primary reference. Other villagers, however, may follow the ritual practices of their ancestors, and show little interest in the study of texts and their relevance. Young people who attend public schools may be ambivalent about the signs and languages of the local Islamic understandings preferred by their parents and grandparents. Youth movements based in mosques bring young people into supra-local networks that take them further from the local understandings of their grandparents. Finally, we should not overlook those villagers who are not enthusiastic about religion, and who have little confidence in Islam's potential as a basis for community life.

The possibility for open disagreement in such communities is high, so people generally appreciate the need to control the risk of negative consequences arising from oratorical events. The decision to invite this or that preacher to perform is made, in most cases, by a committee (*panitia*) representing the community or organization, and the committee takes care to avoid favoritism when selecting the orator. When participating in a heterogeneous audience, audience members put aside their individual preferences, and attend without expecting their specific inclinations to be exclusively accommodated by the preacher. But there is a condition to this: the preferences of their neighbors must not be indulged or prioritized. In other words, most *santri* will be happy to put aside their *santri*ness at a preaching event, providing the preacher is respectful or at least neutral toward *santri*. The teenager will put aside her preference for the culture known as *gaul* (sociability), which provides a set of prestige markers for Indonesian youth,[9] on the understanding that the sermon will not show total deference to the sensibilities of the older generation.[10] The old people will tolerate youth culture as long as it is does not convey too many values and meanings they do not recognize. In this way, the mixed audience is characterized by concessions, compacts, and conditions concerning cultural and religious content.

Bandung audiences are willing to make these accommodations because they are free to express and experience their specific religious preferences in other spaces where they form homogenous audiences. Modern Indonesian society offers many

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[8] Accounts of Islamic diversity in West Java include Lynda Newland, "Under the Banner of Islam: Mobilising Religious Identities in West Java," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11,2 (2000): 199–222; Dundin Zaenuddin, "Primordialisme Politik Syariat Islam Bandung," in *Primordialisme dan Konflik Golongan: Wacana Politik Syariat Islam*, ed. Dundin Zaenuddin, Endang Turmudi, M. Azzam Manan, and Leolita Masnun (Jakarta: PMB-LIPI, 2001), pp. 16–54.

[9] On *gaul*, see Nancy Smith-Hefner, "Youth Language, Gaul Sociability, and the New Indonesian Middle Class," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 17,2 (2007): 184–203.

[10] Teenagers, it should be noted, generally attend preaching events in comparatively small numbers, although they attend celebratory events in greater numbers than they do events of other kinds.

opportunities for specialized religious experience through courses of study, youth groups, sufi orders, renewal groups, spiritual practices, socio-religious mass movements, diverse religious media, and politico-religious initiatives. But for the period of participation in a heterogeneous audience, one's specific preference is put to the side.

This "stepping around" individual preferences at heterogeneous events has a flattening effect on the positions expressed by preachers.[11] It is a strategy with obvious resemblance to the "lowest-common denominator" approaches adopted by mass-media organizations. [12] The preacher touches on normative foci and employs communication strategies that will be favorably received by as many members of the mixed audience as possible, while avoiding representations and performances that favor a particular social grouping or religious segment. Issues of sensitivity are avoided.[13] To ensure effective rapport with the vast majority of those present, orators monitor their audiences closely and work hard to engage them with attractive cultural strategies. It would be a bad outcome if a heterogeneous audience, the members of which hold little in common in religious terms, were divided in their attention or constantly chatting. Because of this, successful preachers not only have high-level performance skills, but are also "astute students of unique, ongoing social encounters."[14] They have the know-how required to communicate compellingly a religious program of nonspecific content.

In contrast, homogenous audiences voluntarily assembling around a shared conviction or preference do not require such communicative competence from their mediators. The competency of such orators is established in other ways. I was a frequent participant in the routine preaching schedule of the reformist group Islamic Unity (Persatuan Islam, Persis), an organization dedicated to the goal of shaping Indonesian society according to the dictates of the Qur'an and Hadith.[15] The celebrated orators of this group have low-level performance skills, and their audiences do not evaluate them against this criterion. Their competency is established in different ways, notably through the speakers' positions in the group's organizational hierarchy. The group's rank-and-file members have great respect for this hierarchy. After all, its high-ranking officials are the exemplars of a religious program that imposes a life-long

[11] In his 1967 book, *Ilmu Da'wah*, Toha Jahja Omar, who was probably the Republic's first academic specialist in *dakwah*, drew on the communications sociology of Gustave Le Bon, Bernard Berelson, and others to analyze the problems posed in communicating with the heterogeneous audience, which he termed the *orang ramai* (literally, "busy people"). The solution to this from the preacher's perspective is to, firstly, ascertain the education levels within the audience, and "aim the discourse a little lower than the audience's average education level, and make occasional variations for the education levels above and below it." See Toha Jahja Omar, *Ilmu Da'wah* [The Science of Predication] (Djakarta: Wijaya, 1967), p. 83.

[12] See John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television, With a New Foreword by John Hartley* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[13] Notable among the topics to be avoided is *fiqh 'ibadah* (the rules governing worship practice). Different Islamic organizations encourage differing practices, and the distinctions among them become emblematic of social differences underlying the organizational borders. Accordingly, preachers often urge heterogeneous audiences to perform their ritual worship (*salat*), but rarely prescribe the ways in which it should be done.

[14] Charles L. Briggs, *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 19–21.

[15] On Persatuan Islam, see Howard M. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State: The Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), 1923 to 1957* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

burden of learning and self-shaping on its members. Competency is also based on skills exercised by the group's leaders off the stage, such as the making of *fatwa* (legal opinion) about issues that concern Persis followers. If some audience members find it difficult to maintain their attention for the duration of a Persis oratory, nobody regards this as a bad outcome or a sign of the speaker's incompetence. As a result, Persis preachers are not obliged to pay high attention to the interaction in which they are engaged when preaching, and thus their preaching events lack the performance elements such as those used to capture and retain the attention of heterogeneous audiences. Homogeneous audiences identify value in the ongoing project to which they assent, not individual mediations of it.

Preaching directed at homogeneous audiences is not part of the argument being made here, and lies outside this article's scope. But the contrast it enables is important for the argument: a good command of communication strategies is crucial to the success of preachers addressing heterogeneous audiences. In contrast, preachers accepted by audiences voluntarily engaged in self-shaping projects do not have to be dynamic, skillful orators.

## Heterogeneity Expands

Heterogeneous audiences are not a new phenomenon in West Java. Nevertheless, as in many parts of Indonesia and the Islamic world, an expanding Islamization process has been evident over recent decades. Indonesians' participation in Islamic projects of ethical self-development is more prominent, and policy makers and governments have been sensitive to this shift.[16] This process signals an increase in the frequency of activities with specifically Islamic meanings, and an expansion of Islamic nuance into activities that previously were neutral in their religious meanings. In Bandung, preaching events have increased in frequency over recent decades as the range of social environments in which preaching situations are created has expanded (as explained below), as the resources made available for those events by the state and private sector have increased, and as the dissemination of preaching events through diverse media has increased. Preaching events have become routine activities in domestic spaces, state offices and utilities, and educational institutions, blending existing publics in novel audience combinations. In many of those environments, heterogeneous audiences end up listening to sermons after gathering for a purpose *other than listening to a sermon*.

In the empirical parts of this article that follow, I focus on two preachers: one is a preacher whose core audiences consist of people gathering to celebrate village life-cycle and calendrical celebrations. The other preacher was active in workplace *dakwah*. The audiences in these settings are highly heterogeneous and gather together for purposes other than to hear a sermon (i.e., for celebration and work, respectively).

Contemporary workplace *dakwah* can be understood through three related historical trajectories. The first is the top-down effect of religious initiatives established

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[16] See Anna M. Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'an in Indonesia* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2004); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*.

within the circles of military and bureaucratic elites. In the 1960s, these initiatives began to exert great public influence,[17] and were further strengthened when *dakwah* emerged as an important priority in the New Order's national development agenda.[18] Ministers and military leaders became orators, with Ali Murtopo, an army intelligence officer and architect of the Golkar electoral strategy, being the foremost example. Collaborations between West Java's provincial and municipal governments, the army, and Islamic elites led to the construction of massive, publicly funded, Islamic facilities,[19] and workplace *dakwah* programs became commonplace in bureaucratic settings.

The second trajectory, which complements the first and occurred simultaneously, is revealed in the growing popularity of Islamic self-improvement initiatives and public piety. While an overt Islamic identity had previously been a non-prestigious one, throughout the 1970s and after it became acceptable to reveal one's identification with and devotion to Islam,[20] and Indonesians across all social classes did just that. Participation in Islamic educational programs and pious activities increased. The broad acceptance of Rhoma Irama's Islamic pop music was a potent sign of the religion's expanding social cachet.[21] But this expansion brought with it a rising expression of discontent with conventional *dakwah* styles. Preachers could not take these growing audiences for granted, for it seemed Indonesian Muslims were not content with what they perceived as the disciplinary orientation of conventional oratory.[22] Gone were the days when preachers could *mengejek* (deride) their audiences; from now on, preachers would have to *mengajak* (invite) them.[23] Novel predication groups, like Bandung's Salman movement, provided programs with contemporary-sounding names like "Mental Training" and "Studi Islam Intensif." Audiences began to accept *dakwah* mediations from artists and popular culture figures possessing none of the learning of traditional orators, creating polemic about the value of their contributions.[24] Workplace audiences were important sites in this search for *dakwah* mediations that suited new social configurations.

The third strand in the story of workplace preaching is the instrumental potential of *dakwah* in the bureaucracy. Since the introduction of regional autonomy after the collapse of the Suharto government, Indonesians have chosen regional leaders by

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[17] See Pusat Da'wah Islam Indonesia, *Forum Da'wah* (Djakarta: Pusat Da'wah, 1972); and "Islam Naik, Pelahan-lahan," *Tempo*, December 9, 1978, pp. 44–50.

[18] Porter has interpreted these initiatives as elements of a corporatist strategy aimed at restraining pluralism and Islamic political influence, see Donald J. Porter, *Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

[19] Prominent West Java examples are the At-Ta'wun mosque at Puncak, in the Bogor Regency, opened in 1998, and the Indonesian Dakwah Centre (Pusat Dakwah Indonesia), a multifunction Islamic center in the heart of Bandung, which was conceptualized as an Islamic center in 1978 and opened in 1998.

[20] "Islam Naik," *Tempo*; "Laporan Utama: Sampaikan Quran Walau Seayat," *Tempo*, April 11, 1992, pp. 13–24.

[21] William Frederick, "Rhoma Irama and the *Dangdut* Style," *Indonesia* 34 (1982): 103–32.

[22] "Islam Naik," *Tempo*.

[23] The *mengejek/mengajak* pairing was frequently used in contemporary media about *dakwah*; see, for example, Temasdoelhak Assegaff, "Hubungan Dakwah Dengan Karyawan/Karyawati," *Pelita*, July 20, 1976; and "Induk Karangan: Pendekatan Dakwah," *Pelita*, September 12, 1978.

[24] See "Laporan Utama: Sampaikan Quran," *Tempo*; Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Catatan Kang Jalal: Visi Media, Politik, dan Pendidikan* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 1997).

popular election, and this has brought an increase in the accountability of public officials. Against the background of great dissatisfaction with governmental corruption and inefficiency, religious programs are useful ways for candidates and incumbents to demonstrate their commitment to reform and good government.[25] To some degree, the oratories provided for state employees are symbolic performances in which Islam is "put to work" for the goal of managing public perceptions.[26] The provincial government promotes its workplace programs with transitive terms that imply positive effects on public servants. In a recent publication about these programs, reports were given of two oratorical programs, one named *pembekalan wawasan keagamaan* (provisioning of religious insight) and the other *pembekalan kecerdasan sosial* (provisioning of social intelligence).[27] The names given to these initiatives imply that programs of oratory will increase civil servants' religiosity and benefit their workplace performance.

Workplace preaching is a relatively new phenomenon, and takes place in settings that generally did not exist in the same form before Indonesian independence. Thus, oratorical styles and trends are relatively easy to identify and describe. By comparison, preaching at life-cycle celebrations and calendrical feasts in West Java has no discernible point of commencement, and it is difficult to plot changes to this style of oratory over time. In other words, the cultural innovations taking place in urban spaces are easier to identify than those occurring in village environments. Nevertheless, three related processes can be discerned. First, in recent times, oratory has replaced performance genres that previously were conventional for cyclical celebrations. For example, patronage for *wayang golek* (puppet theater) has suffered due to its swelling cost;[28] the religious and ritual significances of the Sundanese bardic genre (Sund: *pantun*) have become outmoded;[29] and the wedding advice delivered in traditional verse forms (Sund: *sawer*), with its amusing, bawdy wordplay (Sund: *cawokah*), bears a strong odor of village tradition, and its archaic language and symbolism are not well understood by contemporary audiences. Those genres have been receding in popularity at the same time that the acceptance of Islam as a social identity has been broadening. In this way, oratory has become a highly popular celebratory performance genre.

The second process concerns the extent to which *dakwah* performances overlap with non-religious cultural genres, a trend connected *inter alia* to the changing meanings

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[25] See Robin Bush, "Regional Shariah Regulations in Indonesia: Anomaly or Symptom," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, pp. 174–91; and Julian Millie and Agus Ahmad Safei, "Religious Bandung," *Inside Indonesia* 100 (April–June 2010).

[26] Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

[27] See Supratman, Achdiat et al., *Membangun Motivasi Kerja Pegawai Melalui Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Spiritual* (Bandung: Biro Kepegawaian Setda Propinsi Jawa Barat, 2008).

[28] The puppeteer Asep Truna described the process by which he commenced appearing as an orator: "It started when a person holding a celebration invited me to perform. He had been wanting to hire me if he ever held a celebration. He started off wanting a *wayang* performance, but he didn't have sufficient money, so he dropped the *wayang* and asked for a speech [*ceramah*], because he wanted something cheap. I felt sorry for him, so I fulfilled the invitation. That's the story." "Dalang Da'i," in *Cupumanik* VII,4 (November 2009): 59. See also Andrew Weintraub, *Power Plays: Wayang Golek Puppet Theatre of West Java* (Athens, OH, and Singapore: Ohio University and ISEAS, 2004), pp. 40–42.

[29] Ajip Rosidi, "My Experiences in Recording 'Pantun Sunda,'" *Indonesia* 16 (October 1973): 105–111.

produced on the oratorical stage. After a turbulent period in the 1960s, during which Islamic political parties drew wide support, the preaching stage was depoliticized as a result of the Suharto government's restriction on political participation, especially after 1973, when Islamic political representation was by law confined to one party, the PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, The Party for Unity and Development).[30] The government offered strong incentives to religious leaders to support the ruling Golkar party, so the preaching stage's importance as a site of political contest decreased. Participation in preaching events rose as civil servants no longer felt inhibited from attending *dakwah* activities.[31] Entering the 1980s, Indonesians began to experience a period of stability and rapid infrastructure development. Audiences were increasing in size, *dakwah* dedicated to political opposition was marginalized, and villagers had more money. In these conditions, skill in diverse performance genres found approval from oratorical audiences. One experienced preacher explained to me that this backdrop had encouraged him, in the early 1980s, to take his guitar onto stage. To his knowledge, this was the first time such a thing had been done in West Java. This adaptation of diverse cultural materials caught on with audience members, who then came to expect an expanded repertoire of performance genres on the *dakwah* stage. Initially, there were only a few preachers prepared to do such things in West Java. Quite rapidly, however, it became common for preachers to use music, mimicry, and comedy in their performances.[32]

The third process is the role of technology in the development of a celebrity system. Research conducted in Sukabumi reported that, in the 1950s, motor cars enabled religious leaders to increase their spheres of influence, which in turn allowed communities to select their preachers from a wider range of possibilities.[33] The recording and distribution of sermons through communications technology, first radio then sound recording, further spread the distinctive styles of individual performers across provincial and national spaces.[34] In the 1990s, digital video technology (including video pirating) facilitated the widespread distribution of recordings of the performances of high-profile Sundanese orators. Through these media, Sundanese audiences came to know the broad range of cultural genres being mobilized by Sundanese preachers, and formed shared opinions about who the top exponents were.[35] Prestige was concentrated in a small number of preachers, and an economic

[30] See chapters four and five of Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[31] See Andrée Feillard, "Nahdlatul Ulama dan Negara: Fleksibelitas, Legitimasi dan Pembaharuan," in *Gus Dur, NU dan Masyarakat Sipil*, ed. Ellyasa KH. Dharwis (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994), pp. 1–60.

[32] I am grateful to the veteran Sundanese preacher Zainal Abidin for explaining these developments to me. Developments at the national level were similar to the regional level developments described above. The first Indonesian preacher to develop a mass following among heterogeneous audiences was Zainuddin M. Z., who emerged as a national figure in the late 1970s and became a dominant, mass media performer in the 1980s. See "Laporan Utama: Saya Ustad, Bukan Artis," *Tempo*, April 28, 1990, pp. 74–83.

[33] Selo Soemardjan, *Gerakan 10 Mei 1963 di Sukabumi* (Bandung: Eresco, 1964), pp. 33–35.

[34] The star Sundanese preacher of the 1980s and 1990s, A. F. Ghazali (d. 2001), left behind a corpus of cassette recordings that, judging from the increasing availability of his titles in 2010, appears to be growing in popularity a decade after his death; see A. F. Ghazali, *The People's Religion: The Sermons of A. F. Ghazali, Selected, Transcribed, and Translated by Julian Millie* (Bandung: Cupumanik, 2008). In contrast to the written legacies left by West Java's learned *ulama*, A. F. Ghazali left a sensory legacy.

[35] A similar process enabled the emergence of celebrity puppeteers. See Andrew Weintraub, *Power Plays*, pp. 81–106.

structure developed such that organizers were prepared to pay large sums for sermons by these men at life-cycle celebrations. As a result, in contemporary Bandung, the top preachers earn significant financial rewards, and that encourages lesser-known preachers to model those popular preachers.

## Heterogeneity in Village Festivities

Kyai Haji Al-Jauhari was born in 1971 in Garut, a region of West Java. Most of his preaching is delivered in Sundanese, and most of his engagements are at life-cycle celebrations in villages, and at commemorations of Islamic feast days and national holidays. These invitations come to him from families hosting celebrations and from committees acting on behalf of village elders or mosque committees (Dewan Kemakmuran Mesjid, DKM). West Javanese celebrations of weddings and circumcisions frequently extend for two or three days, and a sermon by Al-Jauhari is typically the high point of a program including a *dangdut* concert, or, for hosts willing to spend large sums of money, a rod-puppet performance.

Al-Jauhari's name and preaching style are very well known in West Java. When chatting with people about my project (for example, while using public transportation), people would usually name him as their favorite preacher. But his name has not spread by word of mouth alone. He has contractual agreements for the manufacture and sale of sound recordings of his sermons. While the licensed recordings are legal, others are not. Many VCD and DVD sellers (VCDs are video compact discs, and DVDs are digital video discs), who maintain stalls in the bus terminals and busy thoroughfares of Bandung and other cities, offer illegal copies of movies for very cheap prices.[36] These stalls usually have in stock a number of illegal recordings of Al-Jauhari sermons, sitting beside illegal copies of performances by popular *wayang golek* groups. The sermons (and puppet shows) are filmed illegitimately by audience members and then packaged into commercial products. With such exposure, it is not surprising that Al-Jauhari's schedule is booked solid with invitations to speak. It is not uncommon for him to preach on three stages in a single day, and, according to his own reckoning, a community will usually invite him to speak twelve times before it invites another preacher.

Crowds of more than five thousand are common at his performances, which are especially enjoyed by poor villagers, whose range of entertainment and cultural options is limited by their financial means. It is not uncommon for people to walk long distances from neighboring villages to hear a sermon by Al-Jauhari, and then walk home again the same night. Much of the respect accorded to him by village communities is based on his self-styling as a member of the elite class known as *ajengan* (*ajengan* is the Sundanese word for *kyai*). He owns and manages a *pesantren* in Garut, which he finances himself. His deportment is also relevant, for he usually wears a long, flowing tunic and scarf. As discussed below, his status as *ajengan* is signaled in

[36] For a filmmaker's first-person account of the underground film-piracy industry, see: John Torres, "Piracy Boom Boom," in *Glimpses of Freedom: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*, ed. May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), pp. 63–72.

performance by his frequent entextualizations (in Arabic) of excerpts from Islam's textual sources, the Qur'an and hadith.

In village celebrations, the host, audience, and preacher generally agree on the importance of creating a festive atmosphere (Ind. *ramai*) that can be enjoyed by a family audience, and, as a result, I have strong memories of the multi-vocality, energetic humor, verbal artistry, and coarseness of Al-Jauhari's preaching. Bodies roll with laughter. A sermon by Al-Jauhari is a festive occasion. In more scientific terms, the distinctive quality of his preaching is its dynamic and frequent variation in linguistic and performance genres. *Ramai* is created by his speedy turns between a wide repertoire of genres, and also by the constant dialogue he maintains with the audience (e.g., Al-Jauhari: "Is that right, ladies?" Women in the audience: "Yes!"). This dialogue supports his efforts to engage and captivate the audience for the duration of his sermon, usually for around one hour.

The variety of genres in an Al-Jauhari performance is extreme. From one fifteen-minute segment,[37] I created the following list of language varieties used by him (in order of frequency and duration): Sundanese (with coarse and refined levels used for effect), Arabic (referencing Qur'an and hadith), Indonesian, Jakarta-centered youth prestige language (*basa gaul*), and English. Language registers and discursive structures apparent in the segment included: narration (of Qur'anic stories as well as familiar scenarios from daily life); admonition in Islamic modes; recreations of naturally occurring dialogues (often between Qur'anic characters speaking in distinctly Sundanese modes); fixed Arabic texts for supplication and repentance; replications of "media voices," such as romantic dialogue from television drama (*sinetron*, soap operas) and advertisements (hyper-masculine voice-overs); *kirata* (creating new meanings for words by giving novel meanings to the syllables); mimicry; and proverbs. He is best known, however, for his great talent in vocal performance genres and his ability to move freely and skillfully between them, including Qur'anic performance, Arabic praise formulas (*salawat*), popular song in Sundanese and Indonesian, and *dangdut*.

Audiences accept him as a virtuoso performer in all those genres, and in some promotional material he is referred to as the *Dai Serba Bisa* (The All-around Preacher). The "star system," which guides many communities in their selection of preachers, has favored his career. The result has been financially rewarding for him, as communities are willing to pay him handsomely to speak at their events.

The rapid switches between genres accomplished by Al-Jauhari are not, of course, random. In fact, two prominent co-occurrence patterns give coherence and logic to his

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[37] The source of this segment was the illegally produced VCD of a sermon delivered at a celebration held to mark simultaneously a local wedding and the birth of the Prophet (*maulid*). The event took place in Sumedang, in 2007, and the sermon was entitled *Tausiyah dina raraga Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW sareng resepsi walimatul nikah Titi Martini S.Tp. ka Yuda Anwari S.Sos 8 April 2007 di lingkungan Pasar Inpres Sumedang* (Advices given at the Commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's Birth and the Wedding Reception of Titi Martini and Yuda Anwari on 8 April 2007 at the Sumedang "Inpres" Market). I purchased this VCD from a stall in a bus terminal in Bandung. Al-Jauhari considers the availability and circulation of unauthorized VCDs as a form of marketing that spreads knowledge of his style among many people.

generic variation.[38] The first is his reliance on the stock strategy of the traditional *kyai*, namely, entextualizations of hadith and Qur'an. These emerge in frequent, rapidly uttered stretches of Arabic, but also in formalized, melodic forms, which are widely studied and admired in Indonesia.[39] Qur'anic literacy has traditionally been high in West Java's village communities and competency in and familiarity with Islamic textual sources are recognized as important conditions to the acceptance of a preacher as an authoritative mediator. The polished melodic renditions only add to the audience's appreciation.

Although Al-Jauhari's audiences accept the summoning of Qur'an and hadith as a sign of learning and authority, not all Islamic audiences in contemporary Bandung are willing to acknowledge this highly objectified conception of Islamic knowledge as a sign of competency. As I argue below, for some Muslims, this objectification is a sign of an Islamic subject that has failed to move with the times. Some audience members will bristle at the assumption that they are part of an Islamic collective that can be impressed by frequent and sonorous verbalizations of the Qur'an and hadith.

The second co-occurrence pattern emerges from the cultural subject we can construct out of his preaching: a Sundanese Muslim who resides in an urban or rural village, watches national television, and listens to national radio. Al-Jauhari's performance shows sensitivity to his audience members' familiarity with all the cultural and media resources implied in this putative subject.

An illustrative example is a trick I frequently observed him using: he opens a dialogue with the young children who often gather at the very lip of the stage. He then selects one child and directs a series of questions to him or her, in Sundanese, all of which the audience can hear via the microphone and sound system. The first question is, "What is the name of the first Teletubby?"[40] The child answers, "Tinky Winky." "What is the name of the second Teletubby?" The child answers, "Dipsy." "What is the name of the third Teletubby?" "Laa-laa." "On what date did the ascension and night journey of the Prophet Muhammad take place, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him?" The child stares at the preacher in silence, open-mouthed. The audience members laugh as the preacher turns to them and complains rhetorically, "Look at the state of our children's Islamic knowledge!"

The Teletubbies example is a telling sign of the globalized cultural knowledge of contemporary Sundanese villagers. Al-Jauhari's successful preaching draws on his awareness of this cultural knowledge, which includes local convention as well as global forms. This explains Al-Jauhari's many references to contemporary national television, *gaul* culture, Indonesian pop of all eras, as well as Sundanese performance genres.

Not all members of a village audience will recognize contemporary cultural forms like the Teletubbies, but skillful preachers are able to navigate around the potential for

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[38] For the concept of co-occurrence rules, I am indebted to Judith Irvine's widely cited article on formality in performance: Judith T. Irvine, "Formality and Informality in Communicative Events," *American Anthropologist* 81,4 (December 1979): 773–90.

[39] See Anna Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice.*

[40] "Teletubbies" is a branded Western television program for children that has attained popularity in Indonesia.

confusion. The Teletubbies example illustrates this, for Al-Jauhari performs the sequence in a way that is highly inclusive with respect to age differences. Children feel directly addressed in this scene, of course. But even the old people, likely unaware of what a Teletubby is, are nevertheless attracted by the "cuteness" of the scenario, and also by the affectionate humor of a child being put on the spot for her (lack of) knowledge. It is a smart strategy for an "all-ages" audience. He also mitigates the risk of audience confusion and alienation by specifically aimed meta-commentary. After singing an excerpt from a contemporary Indonesian song that heavily references Jakarta youth culture, Al-Jauhari tells the audience: "The grandmothers are staring at me open-mouthed. They are asking, 'What song is that?'" A short while later, after another Indonesian song, he says, "The grandmothers are still looking blankly at me! That is a song called 'Dealova,' ladies, by a singer called Once." This acknowledgement and its gentle mockery delight the entire audience. The meta-commentary affectionately points out the older generation's disconnection from contemporary culture, but at the same time is a highly inclusive move in its direction.

Al-Jauhari relies on capturing his audience's attention totally, thereby engineering what Jane Monnig Atkinson has called a "performer based" event.[41] His audience gathers with little shared commitment to a religious agenda, but is willing to give attention to Al-Jauhari's virtuoso performance. With his knowledge of the cultural worlds of contemporary village-based Sundanese-Indonesian religious and cultural subjects, with his rare performance abilities, and with his skillful meta-commentary, he succeeds in commanding the attention of highly heterogeneous audiences.

His style is sometimes criticized, for various norms that constrain preaching practice are given recognition in West Java,[42] resembling the oratorical etiquette (*adab ul-dakwah*) observed by Hirschkind in his research on *dakwah* cassettes in Egypt.[43] As a result of these norms, in some preaching situations Al-Jauhari's hybrid of contemporary culture and religion is not welcome. But I do not give great attention to this normative discourse here because his successful career proves that organizing committees in his particular milieu do not treat the norms as compelling. As noted earlier, it is common for Al-Jauhari to perform on three stages per day, and he estimates he performs seven hundred engagements per year. Organizing committees were in unanimous agreement concerning the attractive powers of his preaching: he ensures the community's events will be well-attended. In times when mosque committees are anxious about poor attendance at the mosques built by their ancestors, Al-Jauhari's broad drawing power is welcome, and the norms that could be arranged against him are not persuasive enough to outweigh this consideration.

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[41] Jane Monnig Atkinson, *The Art and Politics of Wana Shamanship* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1989), p. 252.

[42] When discussing Al-Jauhari, some West Javanese cite the maxim *tontonan, bukan tuntunan* ([that preaching is] spectacle, not guidance). This maxim places the value of preaching as moral guidance above its value as spectacle or entertainment (see, for example, Nurcholish Madjid, "Da'wah Meriah Penuh Hikmah," *Tempo*, April 11, 1992, p. 24). Many preachers in West Java respond to this maxim by limiting their reliance on generic variation. In conversations with me, some described Al-Jauhari as a preacher who oversteps the boundary between spectacle and guidance. See also Julian Millie, "'Spiritual Meal' or Ongoing Project? The Dilemma of *Dakwah* Oratory," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, pages 80–94.

[43] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*.

## *Dakwah* **in the Bureaucracy**

The workplaces of Bandung's civil servants are heterogeneous settings in which orators provide Islamic verbal performances that contrast greatly with those encountered at life-cycle and calendrical celebrations. I spent a few months attending the preaching schedule of the Bandung Water Board, a municipal utility centrally located in Bandung. The utility employs about seven hundred people, almost all of them post-secondary graduates in technical fields. The grounds of the utility include a small mosque constructed in the late 1980s. The mosque committee, which is made up of employees, invites a popular preacher to give a sermon at the monthly roll-call/flag-raising ceremony, called *apel pagi*.[44] During the fasting month, a preacher attends weekly.

Judging from my experience at the Water Board, the popularity of workplace preaching ebbs and flows. Since about the year 2000, the municipal government has urged its utilities to provide *dakwah* events for employees, and a specific directive to that effect was issued in 2004. Currently, the municipal government has made the "upgrading of Islamic education for state employees" a high-priority goal of its religious program for civic renewal.[45] Employees' reactions to the program match the range of their degrees of piety: some workers are highly enthusiastic about the events, others appreciate them without being overly supportive, staff members who maintain their own personal routines of piety tend to be skeptical, and still others find the events a complete waste of time. In general, however, the program is supported by staff members.[46]

The mosque committee ensures that noncontroversial preachers are invited, for the Water Board audience is heterogeneous. It is, in some ways, less diverse than the village audience, especially in terms of the audience members' ages: all workers are adults of pre-retirement age (children and retirees are not present). Furthermore, as skilled and professional people, the audience members share a common status as university and technical-college graduates. Yet by other measures the audience is equally, if not more, diverse than the village audience. The graduates employed by the Water Board come from a broad cross-section of social environments, and include people from outside the Sundanese ethnic group. Their Islamic preferences are possibly wider in variety than those found within a village audience. Preachers giving sermons to such employees are aware of the risk that some audience members might be easily offended. A successful sermon in this environment is noncontroversial and

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[44] The *apel pagi* consists of an assembly of employees, in quasi-military formation, who listen to announcements and motivational messages from their superiors. It sometimes includes a flag-raising ceremony. The word *apel* is borrowed from the Dutch *appel*, meaning a roll call or muster.

[45] Walikota et al., *Bandung Agamis: Landasan, Pendekatan, Indikasi, dan Program Aksi* (Bandung: Sekretariat Daerah Kota Bandung, 2009); and Julian Millie and Agus Ahmad Safei, "Religious Bandung."

[46] The Water Corporation's management saw increased levels of diligence and productivity as potential gains from the preaching program, but did not believe this gain had actually been realized in practice. Nevertheless, the management did not expect preachers to focus on the theme of workplace diligence in their sermons, and the program was not dependant on the goal of stimulating work performance. A more basic goal of the program, according to management, was to develop the general spiritual (*rohani*) life of the workforce.

pleasant to listen to, and it skillfully shapes Islamic norms in support of the work ethic encouraged by the workplace hierarchy.

Three prominent features distinguish workplace sermons from village sermons. First, the workplace sermon is delivered in Indonesian. An obvious reason for this is that the audience is multi-ethnic, but, in fact, the choice of language is not made solely on the grounds of intelligibility (discussed below). Second, workplace sermons are often distinguished from "traditional oratory" by the appellations bestowed on them by organizers, who sometimes describe them with terms like *diskusi* (discussion) and *pengajian* (study event). These terms give a prestigious ambience of learning and self-improvement to preaching events.

Third, the performances are far less busy with generic variation relative to Al-Jauhari's preaching. The skillful workplace preachers rely on a degree of generic variation, but to a far lesser extent than that which I observed Al-Jauhari using. Workplace preachers rarely move out of a register approximating natural conversation. The strategy of moving between performance genres to hold the audience's attention is not practiced, and entextualizations of Qur'anic verses and hadith are minimal. Melodic recitations are absent. A workplace preacher resembles his counterpart on the village stage inasmuch as they both succeed by engaging their audiences, but the workplace performer is not valued for his skills in either performance genres or Qur'anic skills. The workplace is not a site for virtuoso displays of singing or pious knowledge, but for the establishment of communication among equals in language appropriate for such exchanges.

The humor mobilized by preachers in the Water Board was low-key but strategically important. The preacher reads backchannel cues from the audience, particularly participants' body language, and if tiredness or boredom appears to have reached unacceptable levels, he will resort to a quick burst of humor, usually an ironic reflection on daily life. Such strategies arouse a torpid audience. When explaining this technique, one experienced preacher demonstrated the effect of these "insertions" (*selingan*) on the audience by suddenly jerking his body into a rigidly straight position, using the English word "refreshing" to describe the strategy. Importantly, these insertions are invariably code-switches to Sundanese. Most of the preachers invited into the Water Board speak Sundanese, and the regional language enables them to create humor far more effectively than does the national language.

The humor is measured, however, for too much generic variation would conflict with rules of acceptable behavior prevalent in the workplace. In his research on language ideology and preaching in Java, Ward Keeler found that male audience members gave mostly negative critiques of festive, multi-vocal preaching, even when those surveyed reported that they had been stimulated by the performance. Keeler's informants instead gave approval to preaching delivered in a "constricted style" characterized by a "single, serious tone, constant use of either refined Javanese or the national language, Indonesian, or perhaps a mixture of the two, plus a great deal of Arabic, and the exclusion of song and narrative."[47] Keeler found this preference to be motivated by the status aspirations of the listener. Speakers associated the ponderous,

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[47] Ward Keeler, "Style and Authority in Javanese Muslim Sermons," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 9,2 (1998): 166.

monotonous style with modern, urban elites. This style was seen as the medium for the expression of power in the modern state. Furthermore, men approved of the restrained, less expressive preaching style because it is "indicative of self-possession and control, an attribute of people who are in possession of power and deserve to exercise authority."[48] The spontaneous, unrestrained participation of audiences in Al-Jauhari's preaching is risky for the status aspirations of Indonesian males, and this limits the variety of performance skills that a workplace preacher might use.

E. Z. Muttaqien, who died as a result of a car accident in 1985, was an exemplary workplace preacher. I never attended a sermon by this man, but he is useful for this analysis because he has been widely acknowledged as a pioneer in Bandung's emerging field of workplace *dakwah* in the early 1980s, and especially for preaching in bureaucratic environments.[49] He is a good example of a mediator with sensitivity to emerging audiences. Furthermore, he has left an extensive legacy of sermons in written form, which provides a resource for studying his efforts to articulate the religion with the evolving cultural particularism of Bandung's bureaucrats.[50]

Born in Tasikmalaya, West Java, in 1925, Muttaqien's early public profile was established through political activity. From 1945, he was the West Java leader of the youth wing of Indonesia's Islamic political coalition known as Masyumi (Consultative Assembly for Indonesian Muslims).[51] After independence, he continued to strive for an Islamic coalition, a struggle that eventually brought him and other Masyumi figures into conflict with Sukarno. He was imprisoned, along with other notables, in 1962.[52] Upon his release in 1966, he did not join other Masyumi followers in continuing the struggle for *dakwah* outside of party politics against the New Order government. Rather, he built on his existing popularity and respect in West Java to remain prominent in public life, becoming a much-loved and authoritative preacher and educator. He was among the first preachers to appear regularly on the state-owned

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[48] Ibid., p. 174.

[49] Ajip Rosidi, *Hidup Tanpa Ijazah: Yang Terekam Dalam Kenangan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2008), p. 845; Lukman Shoury, "Di Antara Pro dan Kontra," in *Ajengan Dalam Kenangan: Kumpulan Kesan Mengenai Sosok dan Kiprah Dr. (H.C.) K.H. E.Z. Muttaqien*, ed. Septiawan Santana K. et al. (Bandung: Lembaga Studi Islam UNISBA, 2009), pp. 111–17.

[50] Muttaqien's oratories were frequently adapted by himself and others for publication in newspapers in the days after he delivered them, a method of producing content frequently relied upon by Bandung media outlets and activist groups. See Julian Millie, "Regional Preaching Scenes and Islamism: A Bandung Case Study," in *Radicalisation Crossing Borders: New Directions in Islamist and Jihadist Political, Intellectual, and Theological Thought and Practice*, ed. Sayed Khatab, Muhammad Bakashmar, and Ela Ogru (Caulfield: GTREC, 2009), pp. 150–68. Others were published as short monographs, especially in the early days of Muttaqien's career, when he was a major player in the highly charged ideological contest between Muslim groups and communists; see, for example, E. Z. Muttaqien, *Sikap Muslim Diungkapkan Dalam Berbagai Khutbah* (Bandung: Diponegoro, 1977 [1968]); and E. Z. Muttaqien, *Da'wah dan pengorbanan: Chotbah Iedul-Adha 1388 di kota Pekalongan* (Bandung: Diponegoro, 1969). In the latter part of his career, collections of his oratories were published in books, often with the signs of the oratorical context completely effaced; for example, see Agussalim Sitompul, *Jejak Langkah, Cita dan Alam Pikiran Dr. KHEZ. Muttaqien* (Jakarta: Integrita, 1985); and K. H. E. Z. Muttaqien, *Rumahku, Surgaku: Nasihat dan Renungan* (Bandung: Al-Bayan, 1994).

[51] A biography of Muttaqien has recently been published; see Hawe Setiawan, Atep Kurnia, and Amin R. Iskandar, *Ajengan Dalam Perubahan Zaman: Biografi Dr. (HC). K. H. E. Z. Muttaqien* (Bandung: Cupumanik/LSI Unisba, 2009).

[52] Delia Noer, *Partai Islam di Pentas Nasional 1945–1965* (Jakarta: Grafiti, 1987), p. 415.

television channel, and developed a core audience among bureaucrats and corporate audiences.[53]

The written recensions of Muttaqien's oratories reveal him to be a mediator for a new Indonesian class: urban, educated, salary-earning civil servants. He was highly sensitive to the difficulties faced by this class. The frequent advice in his sermons about family life, for example, indicates his sensitivity to changing social structures. This advice was not intended for members of the extended families of Indonesian tradition, but for nuclear families in urban environments. He gave advice, for example, on the childcare needs of families in which both parents were professionals.[54] Childcare facilities outside the nuclear family, according to Muttaqien, would become a necessary part of modern life. He advised married couples to maintain communication as equals, and to seek counseling for marital problems. He gave advice also on the problems of sharing a house with one's in-laws, a sensitive issue in a society that recognizes an unequivocal obligation to show respect and care towards older family members.

His sensitivity to contemporary social realities is evident also in a sermon he dedicated to the classic ailment of individualized modern subjects: stress (he used the English word "stress" in this text).[55] This oration yields important insights into the cultural particularism Muttaqien was so successful in identifying and addressing. Indonesia's bureaucracy emerged rather unsteadily after independence, but by the 1980s its members were enjoying relative prosperity and a measure of consumer power. Their affluence brought with it that revision of social life that Charles Taylor has called a "new concentration on private space, and the means to fill it," which signaled a reduction in the strength of traditional communal and kin ties.[56] A degree of existential anxiety accompanied this development,[57] and Muttaqien's oration on stress allows us to construct an audience of people facing ailments characteristic of post-industrial modernity. His audiences needed Islamic mediations that could become a resource for bolstering the individual self against impediments to its full development. Indeed, a later book of Muttaqien's, a copy of which I have not been able to obtain, was entitled *The Role of* Dakwah *in Developing Individuals and Society to Their Fullness*.[58] If Islamic mediations were to capture audiences in the emergent social context of the bureaucracy, they would not succeed through virtuoso performances and demonstrations of learning. Rather, the useful message would be one that allowed the

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[53] A contextual note is required here. Muttaqien would probably not have gained access to New Order bureaucracies without support from government and security organizations. As a result of this access, his relationships with former Masyumi colleagues who maintained their oppositional stance, such as Mohammad Natsir, suffered. See Hawe Setiawan et al., *Ajengan*, pp. 158–66.

[54] The reference here is to the sermon entitled "The Household in Islam" (*Rumah Tangga Dalam Islam*) in E. Z. Muttaqien, *Rumahku*, pp. 20–41.

[55] The reference here is to "The Role of Religion in Overcoming Stress" (*Peranan Agama dalam Mengatasi Stress*), in Agussalim Sitompul, *Jejak Langkah*, pp. 75–86.

[56] Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 79–81.

[57] "Islam Naik," *Tempo*.

[58] The Indonesian title is *Peranan Da'wah Dalam Pembangunan Manusia Seutuhnya Dan Seluruh Masyarakat*. According to Hawe Setiawan and friends, the book was published by Bina Ilmu in 1982; see Hawe Setiawan et al., *Ajengan Dalam Perubahan Zaman*, p. 179.

individual to navigate his or her way through the pitfalls of a disconcerting modernity.[59]

## Oratory and "Modern" Subjects

I have discussed two preachers whose willingness and ability to respond to cultural particularism won them acceptance as successful oratorical mediators of Islam in contrasting settings. One of them, Muttaqien, discerned the novel religious mediations that would be required by a newly emerging social segment, namely, Bandung's bureaucrats. He was identified in his time as a pioneering mediator. The other, Al-Jauhari, styles himself as the traditional *kyai* figure, and preaches in a social setting that displays considerable continuity with the past. He is nevertheless highly astute in anticipating the dynamic and diverse cultural subjectivities of Sundanese villagers, and then presenting them with virtuoso renditions of the cultural materials of which those subjectivities are constituted.

These figures should not be considered merely as preachers providing contrasting oratorical mediations for different contexts. In the distance between them are significant Indonesian discourses in which contrasting preaching styles are evaluated by reference to "proper models" of Islamic subjectivity. The styles of Al-Jauhari and Muttaqien are treated differently in these evaluations.[60]

Progressive commentators commonly perceive Islamic oratory, in its traditional forms and shapes, as an impediment to projects of Islamic renewal and social change.[61] In 1983, the progressive Yogyakarta think-tank known as The Centre for Training, Research, and Social Development (Pusat Latihan, Penelitian dan Pengembangan Masyarakat, PLP2M) convened the first gathering of Muslim social scientists to discuss *dakwah* and social change. A continuing theme of the published proceedings was that *dakwah* in its traditional, oral forms was not able to provide Islamic solutions to contemporary social problems.[62] According to a key contributor, Amrullah Achmad, Islamic *dakwah* should be the "fundamental motivator of socio-cultural change," and its practitioners should be "agents of change."[63] Conventional oratory could not be a vehicle for this. More than twenty years after PLP2M's first gathering, one of Indonesia's most prominent Islamic feminists, Siti Musdah Mulia stated that the pedagogical and oratorical forums so popular among contemporary Indonesian women have not produced any real benefits for women or helped further their

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[59] I do not imply any dissolution of theological certainty here. Although Muttaqien's mediations for bureaucrats addressed individual subjectivities, he appears as a conservative stalwart with regard to the role of religion in public morality. He was, for example, active in the conservative campaign against the liberalizing reforms to the Marriage Law proposed in 1974. See Shoury, "Di Antara Pro dan Kontra."

[60] My analysis in what follows is informed by the discussions of religious mediation and modernities found in Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*, Charles Hirschkind's *The Ethical Soundscape*, and Webb Keane's *Christian Moderns*.

[61] See Julian Millie, "'Spiritual Meal' or Ongoing Project?"

[62] The proceedings were published as *Dakwah Islam dan Perubahan Sosial: Seminar Nasional dan Diskusi Pusat Latihan, Penelitian dan Pengembangan Masyarakat (PLP2M)*, ed. Amrullah Achmad (Yogyakarta: Prima Duta/PLP2M, 1983).

[63] Amrullah Achmad, "Dakwah Islam dan Perubahan Sosial," in *Dakwah Islam*, ed. Amrullah Achmad, pp. 17–19.

interests.[64] What is needed, in her view, is an expansion of the *dakwah* project into forms other than oratory, forms in which women will participate as active agents rather than passive listeners.[65] Other critiques of *dakwah* oratory denigrate its potential because of its ephemeral, sensory character. The Bandung intellectual Agus Ahmad Safei criticizes traditional oratory because skilled orators make their audiences "laugh and cry," but cannot make them think, and the medium therefore does harm to the development of democratic culture in Indonesia.[66] Yet other critiques highlight oratory as an anachronism. It is a *dakwah* medium appropriate for an epoch that has been superseded by developments in media technology.[67]

In these critiques, *dakwah* is saddled with the role of effecting individual and social transformation, and this role implies the participation of Islamic subjects who contrast with those implied by the oratorical events presided over by the *kyai*. The progressive case against oratory valorizes a listening subject capable of autonomous, critical reflection, and one who is "necessarily in conflict with the community and the forms of collective discipline that undergird it."[68] The idealized media for these deliberative processes are writing and reading, not oratory.[69]

It is true that these critiques of oratory do not make distinctions among the range of Indonesian preaching situations, and prima facie would appear to apply equally to workplace as well as village oratory. Yet this cannot be the case. The critiques do the work of identifying and distancing an "anachronistic" Islamic subject, and this work problematizes characteristics typical of the festive, multivocal preaching events, not of the workplace *dakwah* of E. Z. Muttaqien. Al-Jauhari's *dakwah* is held to be inefficacious by progressives because of its highly sensory texture (laughing and crying), whereas Muttaqien did not employ the generic variation out of which that texture is produced, and he did not hold himself out for evaluation for his skill in performance genres. If Al-Jauhari's audiences are anachronistic for their unreflective acceptance of traditional religious authority, exemplified by the frequent entextualizations of Qur'an and hadith, Muttaqien's audiences appear otherwise because his mediations took shape as communications between equals. He did not assert authority through demonstrations of learning, and was not evaluated for his competencies in the traditional Islamic sciences. If Al-Jauhari appears out of step with contemporary developments because his sermons project a religion objectified in texts that can be rote-learned, Muttaqien's audience members encounter an Islam that can be shaped to fit their own personal development projects. If village audiences appear ignorant because of their enjoyment of what Keeler calls "avuncular" strategies, such as Al-Jauhari's Teletubbies trick,[70]

[64] Budie Santi, ed., *Perempuan Bertutur: Sebuah Wacana Keadilan Gender Dalam Radio Jurnal Perempuan: Skrip Radio Jurnal Perempuan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan/The Ford Foundation, 2005), p. 106.

[65] Siti Musdah Mulia, *Muslimah Reformis: Perempuan Pembaru Keagamaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2004), pp. 502–12.

[66] Agus Ahmad Safei, *Kucari Jalan Terba[l]ik: Simfoni diri Dr. Asep Saeful Muhtadi* (Bandung: Insan Komunika, 2008), p. 129.

[67] M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Intelektual Inteligensia dan Perilaku Politik Bangsa: Risalah Cendekiawan Muslim* (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), p. 158.

[68] Charles Hirschkind, *Ethical Soundscape*, p. 106.

[69] This point is emphasized by Charles Hirschkind in *The Ethical Soundscape*, adapting arguments initially made by Michael Warner in *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2002).

[70] Ward Keeler, "Style and Authority," p. 169.

workplace audiences do not have the cross-generational membership that gives appropriateness to such "lowest common denominator" strategies. The characteristics of oratorical performance that imply an anachronistic Islamic subject are largely absent from Muttaqien's workplace preaching, and, in recognition of this, the organizers in the workplace affirm their distance from conventional models of oratory by giving their preaching events novel appellations such as "*diskusi*," "mental training," or "upgrading."

The progressive critiques of oratory have the result of putting distance between contrasting Islamic subjects, and locating them at different stages of the narrative by which moderns distinguish themselves from their pre-modern predecessors. To use Webb Keane's term, they reveal a "moral narrative of modernity."[71] Muttaqien's oratorical performances imply listeners who are engaged in individualized reflection on a better future, while Al-Jauhari's sermons remind progressives of a "past" they would rather forget.

Some mention of language selection is in order here. The critiques cited above tend to overlook the role of language choice, but it is, in fact, highly significant to understanding heterogeneous oratory in Indonesia. The decision to preach in the regional or national language is closely related to precisely how preachers and audiences reflect on themselves in the range of distinctions just discussed. To recap, the preachers discussed here are native speakers of both Sundanese and Indonesian. Al-Jauhari preaches mostly in Sundanese, while Muttaqien, when addressing his bureaucrat audiences, preached in Indonesian. Behind these choices are, respectively, functional and ideological considerations. In the workplace setting, prevalent Indonesian language ideology compelled Muttaqien to use Indonesian. But where a sermon with high generic variation is appropriate, there is a strong functional preference for Sundanese.[72]

The ideological motivation derives from Indonesians' identification of Indonesian with the modern state.[73] A workplace oratory takes place in an environment heavily marked with signs of the state: the Indonesian flag flies in the yard, photographic portraits of the president and vice president are prominent in a number of rooms, large reproductions of the national symbol (the Garuda bird) are present, and uniforms are worn. Indonesian is the appropriate language for communication in an environment marked in this way because it so strongly references the power of the state.[74] It also references the promises held out by the Republic; Indonesian governments have made Indonesian the signifying vehicle for their goals of development and advancement, so contemporary Sundanese villagers connect Indonesian (not Sundanese) with their

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[71] Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns*.

[72] Intelligibility considerations do not determine language selection. It is true that some preaching situations in Bandung include so many non-Sundanese speakers that Indonesian must be used. But Sundanese is frequently preferred even when the audience includes members of other ethnic groups. The functional reasons stated here outweigh concerns about audience members not fully understanding the oratory.

[73] See Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 123–51; and Joseph Errington, "Indonesian's Authority," in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2000), pp. 205–28.

[74] Ward Keeler, "Style and Authority," pp. 174–75.

aspirations for a better future. If Muttaqien's use of Sundanese in the workplace had exceeded what was necessary for the purposes of "refreshing" his audience, he would have been breaking the ideological ground rules for self-presentation in the Indonesian bureaucracy.

By contrast, Al-Jauhari's choice of Sundanese is determined by practical considerations. If audiences at Sundanese and Javanese festive preaching events are to enjoy a sermon that reflects their cultural subjectivities as Indonesians as well as ethnic subjects, the oratory must be delivered in their regional language (with much code-switching into Indonesian and other languages), for these languages are rich in their capacities for representing what Elizabeth Jelin has called "the individualized, familiar, habitual, micro-climactic of daily life."[75] The regional language invites familiarity and identification, and is unencumbered also by the status and bureaucratic odors of Indonesian. By using regional languages and employing frequent code-switching, skilled preachers are able to mobilize generic variation that registers against the multiple cultural dimensions of village life, creating an engaging and familiar performance.

If oratory's critics are so clear in their perception that a preaching style such as Al-Jauhari's represents anachronistic ways of being Muslim in contemporary Indonesia, it may well be asked whether any rival perspective is expressed by those "left behind" in this narrative, by those, such as Al-Jauhari's admirers, for whom high generic variation is not a marker of an anachronistic Islamic medium. Do they contest this narrative? In one way, this question is not significant. Committees for festive events, oblivious to or in spite of the critical discourse, will continue to invite preachers expert in producing suitably festive preaching performances, signalling that the critiques of oratory are expressed at a distance from the practical realities of the things they make assumptions about. Nevertheless, the particularities of the Indonesian situation invite two significant reflections. First, any traditionalist response will not materialize around the topic of oratory. This is because the truth value of the ideas motivating the progressive critique of oratory is so widely recognized. Certain preaching styles can appear unquestionably "modern" because the reasoning sustaining this appearance is so widely accepted. Most traditional *kyai* would not contest the progressives' emphasis on individual empowerment, for it harmonizes with broadly supported priorities such as literacy, education, economic development, and social equality.

Second, although there is no explicit contest over the specifics of oratory, tension between the Al-Jauhari and Muttaqien preaching contexts emerges in exchanges over other topics. A prominent actor in these exchanges is an Indonesian Islamic institution that is perhaps unique in the Islamic world, namely, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, the Awakening of the Islamic Scholars). The leadership of this organization consists of traditional *kyai* who style themselves in the manner of Al-Jauhari, and use the organization to defend their interests and those of their followers. It produces a counter narrative through its continuing advocacy of "traditionalist Islam." In its public forms and ideological dispositions, NU validates an Islamic subject who is recognized as modern, but who is not expected to meet demands for individual

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[75] Jelin's phrase is cited in J. Joseph Errington, *Shifting Languages*, p. 4. Errington gives the source as Elizabeth Jelin, *Movimentos Sociales y Democracia Emergente* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1987).

transformation. This subject emerges most clearly in the positions expressed by the group's ideologues in relation to the concepts of *taqlid* (reliance on the authority of another) and *ijtihad* (the exercise of personal discretion).[76] The modernist emphasis on *ijtihad* creates a narrative of transformation that mirrors the one revealed in critiques of oratory.[77] But NU has always argued that a Muslim may properly rely on the mediations and interpretations of scholars, implying a lower level of personal reasoning and self-improvement in comparison with the expectations of modernist organizations. From this point of view, the progressive critique meets its counter discourse.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the audiences in the two contexts discussed here do not constitute mutually exclusive groups, but, in fact, overlap. Many of Bandung's Muslims will attend workplace preaching during their office hours, and will gladly join an audience for Al-Jauhari or a similar preacher at festive times. Such people are untroubled by the contrasting subjectivities implied by the progressive critique. But for others, the critiques cited above are unavoidable truths that compel a Muslim to take a specific position, and these people, convinced of Islam's potential for bringing about social transformation, will distance themselves from a preacher like Al-Jauhari, and in some cases, from all oratorical mediations of the religion.

## Concluding Remarks

The field of oratory in West Java is broader than the two settings and practitioners discussed here. Preaching occurs in other environments that also call for attention to their particularities. The social world of the *pesantren*, for example, facilitates preaching situations that do not fit seamlessly into the above analysis. Islamic organizations with specific, programmatic orientations, as noted above, call for a wholly separate treatment.

Nevertheless, the discussion here applies broadly to preaching before heterogeneous audiences, and this segment of the field is important for the volume of participation it draws and for its openness to contemporary social developments. My core finding is that those West Javanese preachers who have found success in performing to heterogeneous audiences mediate not only religion but also the cultural particularism of the diverse audiences to which they preach. In turn, this finding helps to explain the high levels of Islamic participation evident in West Java, calling to mind the analytical framework known in religious studies as the "supply model." According to this model, high levels of religiosity are explained by the variety of religious forms and structures that shape themselves competitively in response to public demand.[78] In the relatively unregulated field of Islamic oratory in West Java, social and religious diversity provide opportunities for preachers to succeed by appealing to the sensibilities of Muslims in diverse social settings. The result is a highly inclusive, highly differentiated range of preaching styles that stimulates the robust public

[76] General sources are Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900–1942* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford 1973); and Robin Bush, *Nahdlatul Ulama and the Struggle for Power.*

[77] Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement,* p. 94.

[78] For a recent discussion of the supply model, see Ted G. Jelen, ed., *Sacred Markets, Sacred Canopies: Essays on Religious Markets and Religious Pluralism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

religiosity evident in the province's population. Where preaching is concerned, there is something for everyone. Because of its broad but differentiated appeal to West Javanese Muslims, oratory continues to defy the "narrative of modernity" in which progress for the Islamic community is represented as a move away from the collectively experienced, objectified, sensory Islam exemplified by Al-Jauhari's preaching.

The competition enabled by the lack of regulation is not played out between organized units competing for support in the manner of denominations, but between talented mediators competing for patronage by anticipating the likes, needs, and preferences of audiences. Some preachers clearly appear as innovators because they read the needs and preferences of emerging audiences, while others style themselves as bearers of tradition but nevertheless owe their success to their ability to read and mediate changing cultural subjectivities.

My closing comment refers to the opening paragraph and its references to the *fiqh*-trained *kyai* or *ulama* as the traditional oratorical mediator of Indonesian Islam. The image of the *kyai* continues to register as a bearer of religious authority for many Indonesian Muslims, so preachers have good reason to style themselves in that image. Nevertheless, my findings indicate that we should be cautious in imagining the *kyai* as a culturally conservative group whose members maintain a static conception of oratorical performance. In fact, every Bandung preacher who has succeeded in preaching to heterogeneous audiences has successfully read his or her audience in its contemporary aspects, then applied his or her findings in skillful preaching performances.