



## INTERTWINING BEAUTY AND PIETY: Cosmetics, Beauty Treatments, and *Halāl* Lifestyle in Urban Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the intertwinement of beauty and piety among middle-class Muslim women in urban Indonesia through the use of cosmetics and beauty treatments within the broader trends of *halāl* lifestyle. It uses an anthropological approach with case studies in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, and Serang, the capital city of Banten Province. Jakarta and Serang were chosen because Jakarta is a picture-perfect example of an older area characterized by the abundance of middle-class Muslims and the vehemence of *halāl* lifestyle, while Serang represents a newer area in this regard. Moreover, this article explores the understanding and practices of religious rituals, as well as the responses of urban middle-class Muslim women towards commodified goods and services, consumerism behavior, and communal piety. We argue that the use of cosmetics and beauty treatments has become one of the most glaring public expressions that has concurrently influenced the way urban middle-class Muslim women perceive themselves, beauty, and piety. In addition, we contend that the understanding and practices of beauty and piety are becoming increasingly complex in urban areas. Finally, we maintain that *halāl* lifestyle has played an important role in strengthening Islamic identity in contemporary Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Cosmetics, Beauty treatments, *Halāl* lifestyle, Piety, Middle-class Muslim women, Urban Indonesia

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## Introduction

CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP on Indonesian urban Muslim expressions focuses heavily on Islamic education,<sup>1</sup> Islamic conservatism,<sup>2</sup> Islamic populism,<sup>3</sup> Islamic commodification and Muslim consumerism,<sup>4</sup> and Islamic pop culture.<sup>5</sup> Despite a few critical

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<sup>1</sup> See Charlene Tan, *Islamic Education and Indoctrination: The Case in Indonesia*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Noorhaidi Hasan, "Education, Young Islamists and Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia", *Studia Islamika* 19, no. 1 (2012): 77-111; Karen Bryner, "Piety Projects: Islamic Schools for Indonesia's Urban Middle Class" (Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, 2013); Claire-Marie Hefner, "Models of Achievement: Muslim Girls and Religious Authority in a Modernist Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia", *Asian Studies Review* 40, no. 4 (2016): 564-582; Azmil Tayeb, *Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia: Shaping Minds, Saving Souls*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Yanwar Pribadi, "Sekolah Islam (Islamic Schools) as Symbols of Indonesia's Urban Muslim Identity", *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 10, no. 2 (2022): 203-218.

<sup>2</sup> See Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia", *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018): 208-223 [Special Issue]; Marcus Mietzner, Marcus, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Rizka Halida "Entrepreneurs of Grievance: Drivers and Effects of Indonesia's Islamist Mobilization", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 174, no. 2-3 (2018): 159-187; Syafiq Hasyim, "Fatwas and Democracy: Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesian Ulema Council) and Rising Conservatism in Indonesian Islam", *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (2020): 21-35; Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and Alexander R. Arifianto (eds), *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia: Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> See Vedi R. Hadiz, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Vedi R. Hadiz, "Imagine All the People? Mobilising Islamic Populism for Right-wing Politics in Indonesia", *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 4 (2018): 566-583.

<sup>4</sup> See Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia", in *Expressing Islam: Religious life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), pp. 15-39; Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere", *Contemporary Islam* 3 (2009): 229-250; Inaya Rakhami, "The Personal is Political: Gendered Morality in Indonesia's Halal Consumerism", *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 7, no. 2 (2019): 291-312.

<sup>5</sup> See Ariel Heryanto, "Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture", in *Islam and Popular Culture in*

works dealing with *halāl* (licit, permissible) issues in a broader sense,<sup>6</sup> serious studies in English on *halāl* lifestyle, particularly on the relations between beauty and piety in Indonesia, are scarce. This article aims to contribute to this emerging literature on *halāl* lifestyle and the relations between beauty and piety in everyday urban Indonesia.

This article investigates the intertwinement of beauty and piety among middle-class Muslim women in urban Indonesia through the use of cosmetics and beauty treatments in the broader trends of *halāl* lifestyle. It uses an anthropological approach with case studies in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, and Serang, the capital city of Banten Province. In addition, this essay explores the understanding and practices of religious rituals, as well as the responses of urban middle-class Muslim women towards commodified goods and services, consumerism behavior, and communal piety.

These Muslim women in question are actively involved, or at least participate, in Muslim associations, Muslim social/charity organizations, and religious activities such as Islamic religious congregations (*pengajian*). They also frequently visit Muslim clothing stores or beauty treatment centres. In this article, cosmetics and other beauty care products are defined as products

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*Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Andrew N. Weintraub (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 60-82; James B. Hoesterey, "Prophetic Cosmopolitanism: Islam, Pop Psychology, and Civic Virtue in Indonesia", *City & Society* 24, no. 1 (2012): 38-61; Wahyudi Akmaliah, "When Ulama Support a Pop Singer: Fatin Sidqiah and Islamic Pop Culture in Post-Suharto Indonesia", *Al-Jam'i'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 2 (2014): 351-373; Wahyudi Akmaliah, "When Islamism and Pop Culture Meet: A Political Framing of the Movie "212: The Power of Love""", *Studia Islamika* 27, no. 1 (2020): 1-33.

<sup>6</sup> See Poppy Arsil, Yeong Sheng Tey, Mark Brindal, Cun Uei Phua, and Denisa Liana, "Personal Values Underlying Halal Food Consumption: Evidence from Indonesia and Malaysia", *British Food Journal* 120, no. 11 (2018): 2524-2538; Syafiq Hasyim, "Halal Issues, *Ijtihād*, and Fatwa-Making in Indonesia and Malaysia", in *Rethinking Halal: Genealogy, Current Trends, and New Interpretations*, ed. Ayang Utriza Yakin and Louis-Léon Christians (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), pp. 80-107.

that are used to enhance or change facial appearance or aroma and body texture. The cosmetics in this study include products that can be used on the face, such as skin care creams, lipsticks, eye and face makeup, and coloured contact lenses; on the body, such as deodorants, lotions, powders, perfumes, bath oils, bubble baths, and bath salts; on hands/nails, such as nail polish and hand sanitizer; and on hair, such as hair dyes, hair sprays, and hair gels.

Seen from a socio-economic perspective, Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halal* lifestyle, and communal piety in Indonesia have become increasingly visible and developed rapidly since the 1998 socio-political reforms that witnessed the fall of the Soeharto administration.<sup>7</sup> The reforms have accelerated continuous economic growth in the country. The reforms that also include decentralization, which began in a structured process in 1999, have resulted in the regional proliferation (*pemekaran*) of new administrative regions, including new provinces and new regencies/cities.<sup>8</sup> Until 1998 there were only 27 provinces, and after the regional proliferation, there are 34 provinces in Indonesia in 2022. Banten, one of our research sites, is one of these new provinces that has demonstrated rapid economic growth.

In general, Jakarta and Serang are two regions that have a very significant growth rate of urban middle-class groups. Throughout

<sup>7</sup> See Minako Sakai and Amelia Fauzia, "Islamic Orientations in Contemporary Indonesia: Islamism on the Rise?", *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 1 (2014): 41-61; Martin van Bruinessen, "Ghazwul Fikri or Arabization? Indonesian Muslim Responses to Globalization", in *Southeast Asian Muslims in the Era of Globalization*, ed. Ken Miichi and Omar Farouk (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 61-85; Yanwar Pribadi, "Pop and "True" Islam in Urban Pengajian: The Making of Religious Authority", in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, ed. Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020), pp. 213-238.

<sup>8</sup> See Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy, "Introduction: Decentralisation, Democratisation and the Rise of the Local", in *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation and Democratisation*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003), pp. 1-12; Henk Schulte Nordholt, "Decentralisation in Indonesia: Less State, More Democracy?", in *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation*, ed. John Harriss, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Törnquist (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 29-50.

history, the 1980s were an important period due to economic progress which led to the emergence of the middle-class groups in Indonesia. At that time, people found jobs as business executives and managers, stock analysts, engineers, bankers, lawyers, accountants, white-collar office workers, and other professional workers.<sup>9</sup> Data from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) show that the number of middle-class people based on consumption levels has grown from 25% to 43% in the period between 1999 and 2009. It means that the number has doubled in a decade from 45 million to 93 million people.<sup>10</sup> The main striking thing of the emergence of the middle class is the improvement of the quality of their life and the fulfillment of their social needs. The presence of middle-class Muslims in urban Indonesia can be seen in many Muslim associations, Muslim social organizations, religious activities, Muslim fashion shops, Muslim beauty care centres, and Islamic schools.<sup>11</sup> While Jakarta has long been a conspicuous place where urban middle-class Muslims thrive, Serang has also rapidly experienced these booming periods since the establishment of the new city in 2007.

Our ethnographic field research in Jakarta and Serang which includes methods such as observations, interviews, and documentation was carried out in various places, two of which were shopping centres and beauty treatment places. We sought middle-class Muslim women who belong to the category of Generation X and Generation Y (Generation X are those who were born between 1964 - 1980, while Generation Y are those who were born between 1980 - 1996) who actively use cosmetics and other beauty care products. These women are classified as middle-class

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<sup>9</sup> Mohammad Hasan Ansori, "Consumerism and the Emergence of a New Middle Class in Globalizing Indonesia", *Explorations: A Graduate Student Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 9 (2009): 87.

<sup>10</sup> Gerry van Klinken, "Pendahuluan: Demokrasi, Pasar, dan Kelas Menengah yang Asertif", in *In Search of Middle Indonesia: Kelas Menengah di Kota-kota Menengah*, ed. Gerry van Klinken and Ward Berenschot (Jakarta: KITLV-Jakarta dan Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2016), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Less Cash Society: Menakar Mode Konsumerisme Baru Kelas Menengah Indonesia", *Jurnal Sosioteknologi* 14, no. 2 (2015): 104-105.

groups according to the term defined by The Asian Development Bank (ADB). According to the ADB, the middle-class is a group of population who spend \$2 to \$20 per capita per day. Based on the expenditure range, there are three categories of middle-class: 1). The Lower Middle who spends \$2 to \$4 per capita per day, 2). The Mid Middle who spends between \$4 to \$10 per capita per day, 3). The Upper Middle who spends \$10 to \$20 per capita per day. In addition to the three categories of the middle-class, there are two other distinct groups: 1). The Poor who spends below \$2 per capita per day, and 2). The Affluent who spend above \$20 per capita per day.<sup>12</sup> In our study, all women we observed fall into all categories of the middle-class. In this regard, we observed and interviewed 24 Muslim women, 12 in each city, who regularly use cosmetics and periodically visit beauty salons and 6 workers/owners of female Muslim beauty salons in Jakarta and Serang. Most of the 24 women in our study have their own source of income, while only a small number of them obtain it regularly from their respective husbands.

Based on the collected materials from the field, we argue that the use of cosmetics and beauty treatments has become one of the most glaring public expressions that has concurrently influenced the way middle-class Muslim women in urban areas perceive themselves, beauty, and piety. For many of these Muslim women who are aware of their physical appearance, consumption of goods and services of *halal* beauty products have become a critical way to build a specific identity as a pious Islamic woman (*perempuan Islami yang saleh*), not only as a Muslim woman (*perempuan Muslim*). In addition, we show that the understanding and practices of beauty and piety among them are becoming increasingly complex. In terms of beauty and piety, these Muslim women hold the view that beauty and piety, despite being not always go hand in hand, are both an integral part of their daily lives, and thus are equally important. Finally, by examining the

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<sup>12</sup> Asian Development Bank, "Asia's Emerging Middle Class: Past, Present, and Future, in *Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific, Special Report: The Rise of Asia's Middle Class* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2010), 5-19.

consumption of cosmetics and the visit to beauty treatments, we find that these Muslim women pursuits of a “true” Islamic identity have placed Islam in the socio-cultural, political, and economic terrains of their lives. The forms of *halāl* lifestyle, along with Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, and communal piety have played an important role in strengthening Islamic identity in contemporary urban Indonesia.

The manuscript proceeds as follows. First, we present a review of the discussions on Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halāl* lifestyle, and communal piety. We then sketch the forms of Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halāl* lifestyle, and communal piety in Jakarta and Serang. Third, we explore the understanding and practices of beauty and piety among middle-class Muslim women in both cities. Fourth, we investigate the intertwinement of Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halāl* lifestyle, and communal piety with Islamic identity. Finally, the last section concludes our topic.

### **Islamic Commodification, Muslim Consumerism, *Halāl* Lifestyle and Communal Piety**

According to The Oxford English Dictionary,<sup>13</sup> commodification is the act of changing something into, or treating something as a commodity; commercialization of an activity that is not commercially natural. Initially, commodification only covered matters such as labour, land, health affairs, and arts. However, in its development, religion and religious symbols are also commodified by the community. Therefore, Islamic commodification can be interpreted as a process in which there are sacred Islamic norms and values that have been developed into commodities that are produced, distributed, and consumed through market economic mechanisms, both by Muslims, as well as by non-Muslims who enjoy it. Greg Fealy reveals that increasing Islamic commodification is due in large measure to the socio-economic, technological, and cultural changes, driving the pursuit of moral certainty, spiritual enrichment, and pietistic

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<sup>13</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary (1989).

identity. In addition, Islamic commodification is known to have strengthened an individualized form of Islam.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, Pattana Kitiarsa suggests that the commodification of religion has formed a crucial dimension in shaping the religious and cultural aspects of many Asians. It has generated convictions from citizens who receive support from the intensive and commercially unnatural commercialization of religious goods and services. Consequently, the commodification of religion has transformed the key symbols of Asian religions into economic goods in the “market of faiths” where they operate in markets that are manifested in ‘symbolic economy’ moments.<sup>15</sup>

Muslim consumerism is a trend among Muslims to consume goods and services related to religious products or related to religious matters on a large scale, which in turn has a close connection with *halāl* lifestyle, namely the tendency of Muslims to consume products that are considered *halāl*, either for personal religious reasons, or because they are influenced by other people. The *halāl* lifestyle in this study refers to the use of goods and services labelled *halāl* which indicates that even though Muslims may not have a constructive attitude towards *halāl* goods and services, the mismatch between their attitude and the expectations of their family or friends can affect their behaviour. They may start consuming and using *halāl* goods and services to ensure that they find a balance between their actions and how they are viewed by others. Inaya Rakhmani explains the concept of ‘*halāl* consumerism’ as a socio-economic order that continues to promote the increasing purchase of goods and services in line with the *fatwā* (non-binding religious opinions) of Islamic authority which is sanctioned by the state. She suggests that *halāl* consumerism is the

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<sup>14</sup> Greg Fealy, “Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia”, in *Expressing Islam: Religious life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), 16.

<sup>15</sup> Pattana Kitiarsa, “Introduction: Asia’s Commodified Sacred Canopies”, in *Religious Commodification in Asia: Marketing Gods*, ed. Pattana Kitiarsa (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 7.

social response of Muslims to the neo-liberal reorganization of the aspects of production and consumption.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike other religious traditions, such as English Puritanism, wherein piety refers primarily to inward spiritual states, many Muslims use the Arabic term of *taqwā* as an equivalent term for 'piety'. The Arabic term suggests both an inward orientation or disposition and a manner of practical conduct.<sup>17</sup> The term *taqwā* fits with the frequent use of the term piety by the women in our study, and so we interchangeably apply the Arabic term in this paper to denote piety. Furthermore, in terms of communal piety, Saba Mahmood discusses the paradox of the piety movement. She explores how Muslim women in Egypt organize a movement to educate one another and to advance the ideal and virtuous self. Mahmood argues that the subjectivity of the participants is developed within and through social norms. The Egyptian women's piety movement shows that agency is not only the subject of liberation or surrender, but also of self-development.<sup>18</sup> Apart from Mahmood, Rachel Rinaldo argues that the piety movement as a religious revival seeks to revive religious teachings and practices and has appeared in all major religious traditions. That is, women can develop their agency or ability to make choices and act by participating in piety movements.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, women will develop more power to act for themselves.

The socio-political transformation of Indonesia since 1998 has invigorated the expressions of identity of the Muslim community which includes ethnicity, religion, and social class. This is demonstrated in the variety of rapid commodification of religious practices and celebrations as well as in the creation of religious

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<sup>16</sup> Inaya Rakhmani, "The Personal is Political: Gendered Morality in Indonesia's Halal Consumerism", *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 7, no. 2 (2019): 294.

<sup>17</sup> See Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Rachel Rinaldo, "Women and Piety Movements", in *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 584.

identity, piety, Muslim pride, and Islamic brotherhood.<sup>20</sup> Overall, since 1998, Indonesia has seen more active participation of Muslims in many aspects of the nation, including democracy campaigns dedicated by the Indonesian government to formulate religious arguments within the framework of support for pluralism, democracy, women's rights, and civil society.<sup>21</sup>

In short, Islamic commodification has transformed religion into marketable goods and services and brought them to the scale and mode of market transactions. Such a process contradicts the rational position adopted by secularization theorists who predict that religion will experience a significant decline as a determinant of social action when society and individuals experience modernization and secularization, as seen in the phenomenon of the decreasing levels of public belief in God, the decline of belief in mystical and supernatural things, and the reduced attendance of the congregations in places of worship.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, religion is forging an intimate relationship with the market economy through the process of modernization. Religious commodification explains the meaning of religion as a market commodity and exchange in a spiritual market.

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<sup>20</sup> See Julian Millie, Greg Barton, Linda Hindasah, and Mikihiro Moriyama, "Post-authoritarian Diversity in Indonesia's State-owned Mosques: A Manakiban Case Study", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 45, no. 2 (2014): 194-213; Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia", in *Expressing Islam: Religious life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008); Ronald Lukens-Bull, "Commodification of Religion and the 'Religionification' of Commodities: Youth Culture and Religious Identity", in *Religious Commodification in Asia: Marketing Gods*, ed. Pattana Kitiarsa (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 220-234.

<sup>21</sup> Robert W. Hefner, "Introduction: Modernity and the Remaking of Muslim Politics", in *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4; Jacques Bertrand, "Political Islam and Democracy in the Majority Muslim Country of Indonesia", in *Islam and Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Johan Saravanamuttu (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Pattana Kitiarsa, "Introduction: Asia's Commodified Sacred Canopies", in *Religious Commodification in Asia: Marketing Gods*, ed. Pattana Kitiarsa (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.

So far, regarding Islam as a product or commodity, there are five sectors that become the most consumed products in Muslim countries. The most important sector is the Islamic finance market, which is followed by *halāl* food, *halāl* beauty products (cosmetics), Islamic tourism, and *halāl* medicines. Given the importance of these products, the expenditure spent by Muslims worldwide in these sectors is about one third of the total world expenditure. This percentage will continue to increase every year in the future. According to research from the A.T. Kearney, Muslim consumption from 2002 to 2008 for all sectors was US\$ 2 trillion per year.<sup>23</sup> With promising patterns like this, this 'Islamic' business is predicted to increase many times in the future.

From the above explanations, we can see that *halāl* cosmetics have become one of the most consumed products in the global *halāl* lifestyle among worldwide Muslims. As such, *halāl* cosmetics are considered an innovation in the cosmetics industry because they introduce *halāl* cosmetics concerns to compliance with applicable *halāl* criteria, starting from the supply chain of raw material sources, transportation, to warehousing and transportation of goods. In this context, Muslim consumers may repeat purchases if the product they want is in accordance with the *halāl* values they believe in.<sup>24</sup> Market research analysts have identified Muslims as an integral part of the world's fastest-growing consumer segments. To enter this promising market, a number of cosmetic companies leave no stone unturned in their efforts to convince Muslim consumers that their products conform to *sharia* (Islamic laws) values. This shows the existence of Islamic commodification which reveals how marketers turn cosmetics into

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<sup>23</sup> Andrew T. Kearney, "Addressing the Muslim Market: Can You Afford Not to?", retrieved from [https://halalfocus.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/AddressingMuslimMarket\\_S.pdf](https://halalfocus.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/AddressingMuslimMarket_S.pdf) (accessed 11 May 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Hamza Salim Khraim, "The Influence of Brand Loyalty on Cosmetics Buying Behavior of UAE Female Consumers", *International Journal of Marketing Studies* 3, no. 2 (2011): 125.

powerful symbols that represent the truth and religious values.<sup>25</sup> Product characteristics that are incompatible with Islamic values can cause cultural conflicts and ethical dilemmas. For Muslim consumers, *halāl* cosmetics and beauty care products must strictly be obeyed by producers and countries that make regulations on *halāl* products. The *halālness* of these products is relevant because they will influence Muslim rituals.<sup>26</sup>

### **Contemporary Urban Muslims' Expressions**

The existence of middle-class Muslims in urban Indonesia can be seen in, among other things, Muslim associations, Muslim social/charity organizations, religious activities such as *pengajian*, Muslim fashion shops, and Muslim beauty care centres. In those places, Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halāl* lifestyle, and communal piety are produced in a specific cultural context that is innovative and embedded in the local-global trajectory of the market economy and religious expression of post-modernism.

As the country's capital city, Jakarta has long been the centre of Indonesia's economy, apart from, the centre of political, social, and cultural activities. It means that almost everything that happens in Indonesia starts in Jakarta, with other regions following suit, including the various trends that exist within Islamic issues. Meanwhile, in Serang, the rise of urban Muslims is partly due to the rapid growth of the city since early 2000 when Banten became a new province after breaking away from West Java in which Serang was made the capital. These new administrative areas such as Banten (the province) and Serang (the capital city) were expected by the residents to provide goods and services to the public, such as transportation infrastructure, employment and job opportunities, and easily accessible education

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<sup>25</sup> Manmeet Kaur and Bharathi Mutty, "The Commodification of Islam? A Critical Discourse Analysis of Halal Cosmetics Brands", *Kemanusiaan: The Asian Journal of Humanities* 23, no. 2 (2016): 63-80.

<sup>26</sup> S. Mohezar, Suhaiza Zailani, and Zainorfarah Zainuddin, "Halal Cosmetics Adoption among Young Muslim Consumers in Malaysia: Religiosity Concern", *Global Journal Al Thaqafah* 6, no. 1 (2016): 47-59.

institutions. As such, these new areas would function as providers of increasingly complex and specialized goods and services. In turn, this condition gave rise to new middle-class groups and the strengthening of old ones that have contributed to socio-economic and socio-cultural transformations. These new and old middle-class groups in Serang consist mainly of Muslims who work as officials and employees of regional and national institutions, local-level political elites, employees of state-owned companies, middle-class entrepreneurs, professionals in national and foreign companies, and other white-collar workers.<sup>27</sup>

Indonesia's middle-class population has continuously increased as the fastest-growing segment of society, as it has expanded threefold from 14 million in 2002 to 52 million in 2016 or from 7% to 23% (The World Bank, 2019). Moreover, data from the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS) estimates that 4.2% of the Indonesian population belonged to the middle-class groups in 1993 and 36.2% in 2014.<sup>28</sup>

Nowadays in Serang, there is a growth of urban middle-class Muslim groups which in turn contributes to the rise of Islamic commodification and consumerism. Various supplies of goods and services under the Islamic label have emerged due to high demand from the people, which have resulted in the city's image as one of the areas with strong Islamic markets. At the same time, the city is also marked by the emergence of new Muslim groups showing the strengthening of communal piety in Islamic centres, organizations, and schools. Both communal piety and religious commodification are definite characteristics of Islamic pop culture or what is known as 'pop Islam', namely the fusion of Islamic faith with pop culture.

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<sup>27</sup> Yanwar Pribadi, "Pop and "True" Islam in Urban Pengajian: The Making of Religious Authority", in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, ed. Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020), pp. 213-238.

<sup>28</sup> Teguh Dartanto, Faizal Rahmanto Moeis, and Shigeru Otsubo, "Intragenerational Economic Mobility in Indonesia: A Transition from Poverty to the Middle Class in 1993-2014", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 56, no. 2 (2020): 193-224.

James Boerk Hoesterey points out that the pop Islam phenomenon in Indonesia includes Islamic-themed novels and films, Islamic fashion, celebrity preachers, New Age Sufi networks among the urban elite, and 'spiritual trainers'.<sup>29</sup> The development of pop Islam has been facilitated by the expansion of new communication technologies, such as radio, television, print media, and the Internet.<sup>30</sup> Ariel Heryanto argues that the development of Islamic pop culture today in Indonesia is largely due to the success of Islamic politics in the post-New Order era.<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere, the emergence of pop Islam has provided Muslims with an important foundation for deconstructing traditional gender roles, building social capital, and acquiring the participatory skills needed to bring 'civil society' into their own communities.<sup>32</sup> The impact of media industrialization on mediated religious expression in Indonesia is substantial. There is an intersection between commerce and Islamic expression in a narrative that uses Islamic teachings to address the social problems experienced by middle-class Muslims.<sup>33</sup>

The rise in consumption of Muslim goods and high-cost rituals, such as '*umrah* (pilgrimage that can be taken any time) among middle-class Muslim women is influenced by mass and social media. Paul Temporal shows that Muslims represent a fragmented audience of about a quarter of the world's population

<sup>29</sup> James B. Hoesterey, "Prophetic Cosmopolitanism: Islam, Pop Psychology, and Civic Virtue in Indonesia", *City & Society* 24, no. 1 (2012): 38-61.

<sup>30</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere", *Contemporary Islam* 3 (2009): 229-250.

<sup>31</sup> Ariel Heryanto, "Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture", in *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Andrew N. Weintraub (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 60-82

<sup>32</sup> Joyce Marie Mushaben, "Gender, Hiphop and Pop-Islam: The Urban Identities of Muslim Youth in Germany", *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 5 (2008): 507-526.

<sup>33</sup> Inaya Rakhmani, "The Commercialization of Da'wah: Understanding Indonesian Sinetron and Their Portrayal of Islam", *The International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 4-5 (2014): 340-359.

who have never previously been strategically engaged by the media as they now discuss, share, and explore entertainment, food, fashion, and education, apart from issues related to religion.<sup>34</sup>

It is not uncommon for the women in our study to be members of Islamic organizations or *pengajian* groups scattered in urban areas. The meetings in these organizations and *pengajian* are often highlighted by talks about matters related to religious rituals and other matters related to non-religious matters, such as the latest Muslim fashion and related products,<sup>35</sup> for example cosmetics and other body care products which are the focus of this essay. In Jakarta, the same thing happens as to what happens in Serang. A young Muslim woman who comes from a middle-class neighborhood in Jakarta explains her habit of using cosmetics.

"So far, I have been regularly using skin care. In normal circumstances, I mostly just wear makeup, which is the *Pixy* brand. For skincare, I use it randomly. If I have pimples, I use skincare for pimples. However, I use makeup more often. I started using makeup since I graduated from high school, around 2013. I am used to seeing commercials. If the cosmetics are suitable, I will continue [using them]".<sup>36</sup>

For many Muslim women in urban areas, the use of cosmetics and beauty treatments is an important activity in everyday life, both for those who work outside their houses and for those who stay at home. For those who work, both are important because the working environment requires workers to appear neat and attractive. Meanwhile, for women who stay at home, cosmetics and beauty treatments also remain important in everyday life. For them, there are various activities besides taking care of the household. Religious activities such as *pengajian* and non-religious activities such as *arisan* (rotate saving meetings) are very essential

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<sup>34</sup> Paul Temporal, *Islamic Branding and Marketing: Creating a Global Islamic Business* (Singapore: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 179 and 181.

<sup>35</sup> Yanwar Pribadi, "Komodifikasi Islam dalam Ekonomi Pasar: Studi tentang Muslim Perkotaan di Banten", *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2019): 82-112.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Uci, 25 July 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia.

for Muslim women to demonstrate their existence and beauty outside of their house. Within these activities, many women who stay at home will attempt to appear best to show their beauty and attractiveness.

“Now I use *Wardah*. [I go] to a beauty salon once a month. The reason I use *Wardah* is because it fits more with my face, is not dry, and is also cleaner. So, I use it due to its functions and benefits. I have been using it for a long time, since I started working [now she no longer works]. Apart from that, *Wardah* is also *halal*”.<sup>37</sup>

The explicit meaning of beauty products that are considered “Islamic” has resulted in cosmetics brands that become very popular among Muslims, as in the case of Muslim beauty salons that are considered good, comfortable, and “Islamic”. In the context of beauty salons, we visited several beauty care salons in Jakarta and Serang. Some of them indicate that they are special salons for Muslim women (they do not accept non-Muslim women, let alone men), while some others denote that they are salons for women only (although certainly most of their customers are Muslim women) that do not accept male visitors even though their aim is only to accompany their spouse or daughters.

“Most of our salon visitors are women who accompany their children to school. During school hours, these women come to our salon. Their average age is 30 - 45 years. What makes our salon a special salon for Muslim women is the fact that our employees are required to wear *hijab* (veil). In addition, we have a special changing room for Muslim women, a prayer room on the third floor, and the treatment begins with reading *basmallah* (A Quranic verse). Men are not allowed to enter our salon. Non-Muslim women are not allowed to enter [for treatment] either. In the past, there were non-Muslim women who wanted to have beauty treatments. But we refused them. We have a membership database of more than 2,000 customers. We just need to check it through their ID cards whether they are Muslims or not”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Ulfa, 30 July 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia.

<sup>38</sup> A conversation between the staff of *Tsabitah Salon Muslimah* salon and our research assistant, 28 July 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia.

In the context of cosmetic brands, most of the women we met revealed that *Wardah* which has *halāl* certificates are their first choice, or even the only one for some of them. *Wardah* is selected because they believe that it not only has *halāl* certificate but also has good quality at an affordable price. The affordable price is made possible in Indonesia because the country is rich in abundant and affordable natural recourses. This advantage will surely support companies to produce good and *halāl* products with economic price for consumers as many Muslim women consider the importance of *halāl* status and the quality of products as the inseparable values of the *halāl* industry. Sukes and Hidayat show that Muslim women in Indonesia consider the importance of the so-called 'spiritual beauty' in the process of their beauty products purchasing. They argue that the concept of beauty for Muslim women means both physically and spiritually. The concept suggests that beautiful women are those who obey and surrender to God. Therefore, Muslim women do not find the 'spiritual beauty' concept offered by other beauty brands that only stress the idea of beauty but neglect the concept of 'soul'. This is shown in their decision process for buying *Wardah* cosmetics. *Wardah*'s strategy to attract Muslim women is obvious. Until 2019, *Wardah* had produced more than 400 products with 135 million products sold per year. As a pioneer of *halāl* cosmetics in Indonesia, *Wardah* has received the *halāl* certificate since 1998.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the *halāl* label clearly indicates that the product is an "Islamic product". The *halāl* label on cosmetics is a clear indication that there has been a commodification of commercial goods which are in turn considered to be products associated with Islam.

"For me, the cosmetics I use must have a *halāl* label. Usually, I use *Wardah* and *Oriflame*'s cream because they are good for my face. In addition, both are also labeled *halāl*. I chose cosmetics for *halāl* reasons and their benefits. First, it must be *halāl*, second, it must be beneficial. What is more important is *halālness*. If the

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<sup>39</sup> Sukes and Wanda Gema Prasadio Akbar Hidayat, "Managing the Halal Industry and the Purchase Intention of Indonesian Muslims: The Case of Wardah Cosmetics, *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 1 (2019): 210 and 215.

product is not *halāl*, it carries risks. Maybe we look beautiful, but we do not know [what will happen in] the future".<sup>40</sup>

These women's narratives on *halāl* lifestyle appear to represent many middle-class Muslim women in urban areas. Such trends are a social process, which, according to Inaya Rakhmani, involves complex social dynamics that reveal the complementarity of economic activity and religious identity. By consuming *halāl* products that are doctrinally and morally justifiable, and available through market mechanisms, one will eventually gradually build a *halāl* habitus, namely a feeling of one's place in the imagined Muslim community, which is problematically isolating oneself. This involves consuming *halāl* products that build life experiences around cultural capital about being a Muslim.<sup>41</sup>

The idea of *halālness* is deeply emphasized by *Wardah* in the form of their products that are made from safe ingredients and free from elements prohibited by Islam. This is an important step to promote that *Wardah*'s products are guaranteed in its quality, safety, and lawfulness to be used by Indonesian Muslim women. In addition, *Wardah* offers an important breakthrough by intentionally choosing their ambassadors with Islamic image, namely public figures who wear headscarves. Despite the success of *Wardah*, a rather different phenomenon is found in rural areas. *Wardah* seems to fail in penetrating the rural market in which many women in the areas consider *Wardah* as either expensive or not easy to find.<sup>42</sup>

In our findings, many of the women we observed are involved in extensive and routine religious activities, both individually and communally. Florian Pohl reveals that one of the main reasons Muslims participate in religious activities, whether displayed in private or public spaces, is piety. Piety, especially communal piety,

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Nurlaela, 28 July 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia.

<sup>41</sup> Inaya Rakhmani, "The Personal is Political: Gendered Morality in Indonesia's Halal Consumerism", *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 7, no. 2 (2019): 291-312.

<sup>42</sup> Sukesni and Wanda Gema Prasadio Akbar Hidayat, "Managing the Halal Industry and the Purchase Intention of Indonesian Muslims: The Case of Wardah Cosmetics, *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 1 (2019): 219 and 221.

is one of the phenomena of modern human religiosity which shows a very rapid process in almost all over the world, both in the West and in the East.<sup>43</sup> According to Michael Dickhardt, the rapid modernization of many Asian societies has not diminished the role of religious practices and belief. On the contrary, the modernization process seems to have encouraged the revitalization of various forms of religion and the emergence of new forms of religiosity.<sup>44</sup>

These women in our study believe that such activities are performed to seek worldly comfort and eternal afterlife. All of them believe that the religious activities they participate in serve to bring them closer to God. By attending many *pengajian*, they also feel the need to appear charming because a good and neat appearance also serves as a display of wealth, power, status, and social class. In this regard, it is not surprising that certain brands of cosmetics, beauty cares, and clothings, especially all of which that have *halal* labels, have enjoyed their sales success through rampant and attractive marketing.

Now, we can see that religious gatherings in urban areas and other socio-religious activities are perfect displays in demonstrating communal piety, religious commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halal* lifestyle, and communal piety. Almost all of these women believe that piety and Islamic identity must be demonstrated in everyday life, not only in the private sphere, but also in the public sphere. When appearing in public spaces, using cosmetics and beauty treatments, we find that there are products and forms of commodification, consumerism, *halal*ness, and piety that stand out.

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<sup>43</sup> Florian Pohl, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia", *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 389-409.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Dickhardt, "Religion, Place and Modernity in Southeast and East Asia: Reflections on the Spatial Articulation of Religion with Modernity", in *Religion, Place and Modernity: Spatial Articulations in Southeast Asia and East Asia*, ed. Michael Dickhardt and Andrea Läuser (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 4.

## The Understanding and Practices of Beauty and Piety

The women whom we met routinely use cosmetics and there are also some who carry out additional beauty treatments in beauty salons periodically. The reasons they use cosmetics are quite diverse. However, there is one common thread that unites them, namely that they want to look beautiful in their own eyes and according to their respective husbands and the eyes of others. Two women in Jakarta and Serang illustrate this as follows.

“In my opinion, I must be full of makeup for work. It is important because my job requires me to do so. For [demands] from people around me, most of them come from my husband. Surely, we want to look beautiful in front of our husband. I also wear makeup because of my own shortcomings, for example I always wear my eyebrows and lashes because my flaws are on my eyebrows. The important thing is that I buy makeup that has a *halal* certificate, suits me, and matches the price too”.<sup>45</sup>

“[Beauty is] important to me and my husband too. That is why every day [I] take care of myself. Why [I] use cosmetics, [because] one of the goals is for these things”.<sup>46</sup>

Apart from being caused by desires that come from themselves and expectations or even demands from their respective husbands and others, several other women we talked to also indicate that beauty is a form of piety or good deeds which are the teachings in Islam. Since it is related to piety, showing one's own beauty is a must. According to Joy Kooi-Chin Tong and Bryan S. Turner, piety functions in the context of tension and competition between social groups as a method of defining membership in a community. Where Muslims are not the majority, there are problems in daily life about how social groups should interact without compromising their piety. Ultimately, piety produces religious self-excellence. The underlying logic is simple: if looking beautiful is seen as an obligation that binds every Muslim woman, then those who are devout show their virtue and piety. Acts of piety are more than just expressions of outward

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Ambar, 25 July 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Eneng, 23 July 2020, Serang, Indonesia.

identity; they are the means that are necessary for developing a pious habitus. As a result, the quest for piety has subjected these women to a contradictory set of identities and demands, the negotiations of which often require the search for justified grounds to balance religious and personal aspirations.<sup>47</sup>

“Beauty is seen as self-care. If we take care of ourselves, [we] will be loved more by Allah. Women want everyone’s attention. It does not have to be luxurious. The important thing is that we must be clean and tidy, then we must be beautiful”.<sup>48</sup>

Since perceptions of beauty have been formed in every Muslim woman, it is not surprising that most Muslim women want to look beautiful. However, not all women feel beautiful, and therefore, according to them, beauty must be obtained by working on it, not just merely accepting the condition. The use of cosmetics and beauty treatments is a common way to beautify them. All the women we observed indicate that using cosmetics and beauty care products is a common and natural thing for them, without any indication that it is against Islamic values.

From our findings, we see that being a contemporary Muslim woman is something that is continually being negotiated, defined, and redefined through or as a reaction to the images, narratives, and knowledge of Muslim womanhood that are built into the commercial market. We show that there is a close relationship between cosmetics as a form of beauty and piety. In this regard, we are also of the arguments proposed by James Boerk Hoesterey and Marshall Clark who argue that Islam has transformed into pop, chic, young, and cool among the urban middle-class Muslims. According to them, popular culture has become an important arena in Indonesia where Muslims compile and imitate ideas about Islam and piety.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Joy Kooi-Chin Tong and Bryan S. Turner, “Women, Piety and Practice: A Study of Women and Religious Practice in Malaysia”, *Contemporary Islam* 2 (2008): 41-59.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Muyassaroh, 23 July, Serang, Indonesia.

<sup>49</sup> James B. Hoesterey and Marshall Clark, “Film Islami: Gender, Piety and Pop Culture in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia”, *Asian Studies Review* 36, no. 2 (2012): 207-226.

## **The Intertwinement between Commodification, Consumerism, *Halāl*ness, and Piety with Islamic Identity**

The elements of Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halāl* lifestyle, and communal piety are closely related to a market economy where there is a close relationship between supply and demand. The growth of urban middle-class Muslims in Jakarta and Serang has made religious business ventures grow in both cities. Both are representations of the state of affairs of other cities in Indonesia which are characterized by the intertwinement of Islamic commodification and the market economy. The use of *halāl*-labelled cosmetics, beauty treatments in salons for Muslim women, and participation in religious activities in public spaces by the women we talked to demonstrate that communal piety and *halāl* lifestyle are an important indication of the strengthening of Islamic identity in today's public spaces. Compared to the New Order era, when Soeharto's authoritarian regime monitored almost all aspects of the lives of the citizens, today's conditions have changed drastically. Due to the increasing trend of people's religious life, now it is not surprising that people are more open in expressing their religious understanding and practices in public spaces; in this paper they do so in the darting trend of communal piety and *halāl* lifestyle.

"Islam is *amaliyah*, belief; the concept of living a good Islam is belief. I try to [be a good Muslim by] believing in what I practice. Good and *kaffah* (comprehensive) religious obligations are obligatory. I already performed *hajj* (pilgrimage), make routine alms, had already learned the Quran, and now I am memorizing it. The concept of religion improves the quality of life too. If something is ordered by religion but we have not had the chance to fulfill it, then my aspirations in the future are to carry it out".<sup>50</sup>

In Indonesia, the practices of Islamic rituals have become part of the culture of consumerism as well as a sign of social status and political affiliation. The rituals have developed into a kind of network that allows many people from different social backgrounds to share and make contacts, both real and virtual.

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Umdah, 27 July 2020, Serang, Indonesia.

Through this network, the messages of global Islamic revival have been significantly amplified, affecting many socio-political fields and promoting a “true” collective Islamic identity. Some of these main identities of being “true” Muslims are wearing proper Islamic clothing, watching Islamic television programmes, gathering at Muslim cafés and beauty salons, wearing headscarves, attending study circles with popular preachers, doing ‘Islamic’ sports, such as archery and horse riding, or making pilgrimages to Mecca; all of them involve religious observance and a consumptive behaviour of (sacred) commodities, that eventually connect an individual indirectly to a larger social group and community in a general sense.<sup>51</sup> Our findings in the field confirm this state of affairs.

“[I spend] Serum and vitamins for around Rp. 1-2 million [US\$ 69–138] per month. I think the price is not a problem, because women are created by Allah [to become a form of] beauty. So, the best in heaven is a pious wife. Why do I get used to taking care of myself? Because it is necessary to please my husband, even though I currently do not have a husband. Because I want to get married again, I do beauty treatment. I feel that at home or wherever I [should be] beautiful. Women must have inner beauty too”.<sup>52</sup>

From the above expression, we can see that taking care of beauty requires a high price. Beauty in Islam, especially in the use of cosmetics and beauty care in salons, has now become an important part of which it has made Islam a commodity and made Muslims consumers of beauty products. Kitiarsa shows that commodification helps redefine religion as a market commodity as well as exchange in a spiritual market which is further expanded by the transnational connections of religious organizations and

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<sup>51</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, “The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere”, *Contemporary Islam* 3 (2009): 229-250; Yanwar Pribadi, “Pop and “True” Islam in Urban Pengajian: The Making of Religious Authority”, in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, ed. Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020), pp. 213-238.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Linda, 27 July 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia.

market networks.<sup>53</sup> The market for religious and spiritual renewal products is somewhat diverse. On the one hand, many Muslims are actively choosing brands and products that are symbolically associated with Islam. On the other hand, some of the most commercially successful piety promotion programmes seem to combine religious teachings with elements of secular culture to increase their attractiveness and demonstrate their relevance to modern life.<sup>54</sup>

As Rinaldo has put it, new ideas about Islam revolve around piety. While Indonesian Muslims, like other Muslims in many countries, are often more relaxed in their Islamic practice, these ideas emphasize that being a “true” Muslim means practicing religion through adherence to certain religious norms. Rinaldo argues that since the late 1980s, many Indonesians have practiced Islamic teachings more cautiously as an important process for becoming Muslim. Many new ideas about Muslim piety concern women. There are many calls for women to wear appropriate Muslim clothing and to behave in a modest manner.<sup>55</sup> This has also been the focus of new religious movements or supporters of re-Islamization.<sup>56</sup> In simple terms, pride in Islamic identity is often expressed through conservative acts, such as the statement that Islam is the truest religion, which sometimes triggers frictions and conflicts with adherents of other religions in unproductive discussions and discourses.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Pattana Kitiarsa, “Introduction: Asia’s Commodified Sacred Canopies”, in *Religious Commodification in Asia: Marketing Gods*, ed. Pattana Kitiarsa (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 6-7

<sup>54</sup> Julia D. Howell, “‘Calling’ and ‘Training’: Role Innovation and Religious De-differentiation in Commercialised Indonesian Islam”, *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 28, no. 3 (2013): 401-419.

<sup>55</sup> Rachel Rinaldo, “Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity in Indonesia”, *Contemporary Islam* 2 (2008): 23-39.

<sup>56</sup> Yanwar Pribadi, “Komodifikasi Islam dalam Ekonomi Pasar: Studi tentang Muslim Perkotaan di Banten”, *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2019): 82-112.

<sup>57</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the “Conservative Turn” of the Early Twenty-first

"I think Islam is a religion that can make the adherents happy, in which there are rules of life that have been determined by Allah. I am proud to be a Muslim because Islam is the truest religion in my opinion".<sup>58</sup>

For the most part, urban middle-class Muslim women we talked to signify the importance of being beauty and piety at the same time. They demonstrate that their piety movements can also produce, what Rinaldo and Ziba Mir-Hosseini call, piety agencies and become a source of their legitimacy<sup>59</sup> with the capacity to encourage these women to be active in the public sphere and to spread and promote social change, especially in relation to the implementation of Islamic values in everyday life. The activities of such communities have offered opportunities for them to discover new skills and knowledge and to create networks, which will enhance their agency as argued by Mahmood and Rinaldo.<sup>60</sup> Thus, they have demonstrated their ability to be active in the public sphere, to expand their power, to use their agency, to contest the domain power structure as agents of social change, and to strengthen their Islamic identity.

## Conclusion

The emergence and rise of urban middle-class Muslims in Indonesia cannot be separated from the country's very dynamic socio-political circumstances after the fall of the New Order administration in 1998. The meaning of religious symbols among urban middle-class Muslim women has varied to reflect new patterns of consumption, pleasure, and identity. We have shown

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Century", in *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the 'Conservative Turn'*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen (Singapore: ISEAS, 2013), 1-20.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Azizah, 23 July 2020, Serang, Indonesia.

<sup>59</sup> Rachel Rinaldo, "Women and Piety Movements", in *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism", *Critical Inquiry* 32 (2006): 629-645.

<sup>60</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Rachel Rinaldo, "Women and Piety Movements", in *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

that the use of cosmetics and beauty treatments has become flashy public expressions of Muslim identity that have simultaneously influenced the way Muslim women perceive themselves, beauty, and piety. For many Muslim women who are aware of their physical appearance, consumptions of goods and services of *halal* beauty products have become a critical way to build an identity as a pious Islamic woman, not only as a Muslim woman.

In addition, we show that the understanding and practices of beauty and piety among middle-class Muslim women in urban areas are becoming more complex. In terms of beauty and piety, for example, these women hold the view that beauty and piety, despite being not always go hand in hand, are both an integral part of their daily lives, and thus are equally important. As we showed above, when most Muslims feel the need to be modern without leaving their religious identity, these women also infer that piety is the main instrument in religious life that a woman needs to possess. However, they also view that piety needs to be accompanied by beauty because it has an important role in shaping a positive image of Muslim women in the eyes of others. This shows that when they carry out their religious activities in private and public spaces, they do not separate beauty and piety.

Finally, we are of the view that for some Muslims, Islamic identity can be shown in various ways; one of which is by promoting “true” Islam. By examining the use of cosmetics and the visit to beauty treatments by middle-class Muslim women in Jakarta and Serang, we find that these Muslim women pursuits of a “true” Islamic identity have placed Islam in the social, cultural, political, and economic terrains of their lives. Urban middle-class Muslims continue to strive to pursue, claim, and promote their own understanding of Islam. The forms of Islamic commodification, Muslim consumerism, *halal* lifestyle, and communal piety have played an important role in strengthening various forms of Islamic identity in contemporary urban Indonesia.

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