

## Religion as Development Capital: A Discourse Analysis of State Construction in the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone Project

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### Suggested Citation:

Ahmad, Ikhsan; Aziz, Rohmanur; Abidin, Yusuf Zainal; Kusnawan, Aep. (2026). Agama sebagai Modal Pembangunan: Analisis Wacana atas Konstruksi Negara dalam Proyek Kawasan Industri Halal Cikande. *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas*. Volume 6, Number 3: 839–852. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v6i3.52369>

### Article's History:

Received November 2025; Revised May 2026; Accepted July 2026.  
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### Abstract:

This study examines how the Government of Banten Province constructs and deploys halal discourse in the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) through official press releases, social media content, and promotional materials produced between 2019 and 2024. The research focuses on key concepts such as the commodification of religion, state hegemony, and the political economy of the halal sector. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the study investigates linguistic strategies at the textual level, the mechanisms of production and circulation at the discursive practice level, and the broader power relations at the social practice level. The object of analysis includes institutional texts officially issued by the provincial government regarding KIHIC. The findings reveal that the state systematically mobilizes religious lexicon and metaphors—such as “halal,” “syariah,” and “qibla”—to naturalize the fusion of religious morality and economic development agendas. The main challenge of the research is its exclusive reliance on state-produced narratives, which limits the ability to capture contesting voices. The study recommends greater public scrutiny of halal policy discourse and a more inclusive approach to community engagement in halal industrial development. In practice, this research demonstrates how religious language can serve as a tool for political and economic legitimation. This study advances the literature on the commodification of religion and the halal political economy by showing that halal discourse functions as a form of governmentality, merging moral authority with market logic to shape new forms of Muslim subjectivity within Islamic capitalism.

**Keywords:** capital accumulation; Critical Discourse Analysis; halal discourse; religious commodification; Shariah governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Development discourse in Indonesia over the past two decades has demonstrated a significant epistemological transformation, where religion is no longer viewed merely as a normative domain or moral institution, but as a cultural and economic resource that can be mobilized in national development projects (Hefner, 2019). This change aligns with the global trend of abandoning the classical modernization paradigm—which for decades assumed that modernity would be directly proportional to secularization—and shifting to a new paradigm that views religion as social, symbolic, and even economic capital within contemporary capitalist structures (Berger, 2014). In the Indonesian context, the integration of religion into development orientations cannot be separated from the configuration of identity politics, the consolidation of democracy after 1998, and the increasing articulation of sharia economics as part of the repositioning of Islamic politics within the modern nation-state (Hefner, 2023).

The development of the Cikande Halal Industrial Estate (KIHC) represents this transformation process. This industrial estate is not merely an economic infrastructure project, but rather a discursive arena where the state produces, disseminates, and negotiates the meaning of the relationship between Islam, development, and modernity. The Indonesian government, through the 2019–2024 Indonesian Sharia Economic Masterplan, explicitly positions the halal industry as a strategic pillar of national economic development. This strategic position demonstrates a shift in the relationship between religion and the state, moving from merely moral governance to utilizing religion as a development capital, possessing not only spiritual but also economic and political value (Rudnyckij, 2019). In this context, KIHC can be read as the state's attempt to articulate Islam in the language of development, positioning it as an instrument of legitimacy and a source of symbolic capital.

However, the meaning of the halal industry is not neutral. Rather, it is the result of a process of discourse construction that reflects power relations, ideological preferences, and the economic interests of the state and other dominant actors. This is where the study of KIHC becomes crucial, particularly because this project exists not merely as economic infrastructure, but as an instrument for producing meanings about "Islamic development," "halal capitalism," and "religious-based progress." Several previous studies have made important contributions, such as Nasir's (2021) study, which highlights the political economy of halal certification (Nasir, 2021), and Heryanto (2020) analysis of the commodification of Muslim identity in the global market (Heryanto, 2020). However, these studies have not yet addressed the discursive aspects of how the state produces discourse and mobilizes religion as a means of development through official media.

This is where the research gap that serves as the primary foundation for this research lies. So far, studies on the halal industry have focused more on economic aspects, regulations, supply chains, or cultural consumption. Meanwhile, studies examining the role of the state as a producer of discourse that structures how religion is positioned, used, and interpreted in development projects are still very limited. Yet, state discourse plays a fundamental role in shaping the horizons of public thought, establishing policy legitimacy, and guiding how the halal industry is understood as part of the narrative of national progress.

Furthermore, research examining how religion is transformed into development capital through political communication and media representation by the state is virtually absent in the contemporary Indonesian context. This creates a significant intellectual vacuum, especially considering that state media is a key instrument for shaping development imagery and a platform for reframing religion's position within the political-economic structure. Therefore, research on KIHC as a construct of state discourse through the media is relevant and urgent, both academically and practically.

To build an adequate analytical framework, this study integrates Stark and Finke's (2000) theory of religious capital and Mitchell's (2002) perspective on state construction. Religious capital is understood as the accumulation of religious skills, knowledge, and dispositions that provide social, cultural, and even economic benefits to individuals and institutions (Stark & Finke, 2000). Meanwhile, Mitchell (2002) emphasizes that the state is not an abstract entity in itself, but a social effect produced through discursive, technocratic, and material practices, which shape people's perceptions of what the "state" is and how it operates (Mitchell, 2002). The integration of these two frameworks allows for a sharper analysis of how the state mobilizes religion as capital, as well as how state discourse shapes the social reality of halal development.

Thus, the objectives of this study encompass three main aspects. First, this study aims to identify the state's discursive strategies in mobilizing religion as development capital. This includes an analysis of the language, narratives, metaphors, and representational structures used in official government media to frame KIHC as a

religiously valued development project. Second, this study analyzes the mechanisms of conversion of religious capital into development capital, namely how religious values, symbols, identities, and legitimacy are converted into economic and political capital that strengthens the state's position in the halal economic landscape. Third, this study aims to uncover the implications of this discursive construction for religion-state relations in the context of contemporary Indonesian development, including how this may expand or limit the space for religious expression in public life.

Furthermore, research on KIHIC cannot be separated from the global context of the halal economy and religious-based industries. Internationally, countries such as Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Turkey have positioned the halal industry as a strategic instrument for increasing economic competitiveness and expanding the global sharia market (Harits Nu'man et al., 2023). This demonstrates that the halal industry has evolved into a global competitive arena, where religious values have become economic commodities and symbols of political legitimacy. In this context, countries compete to construct narratives of moral superiority, sharia credibility, and religious identity as economic assets. Therefore, research into how Indonesia—through KIHIC—constructs religion as a development capital is crucial, particularly for understanding how the country attempts to articulate its position in the global halal economy.

Moreover, the emergence of global phenomena such as the "halal lifestyle industry" and "religion-based branding" further emphasizes that religion has become an integral part of the structure of global capitalism (Shah, 2025). In this context, religion functions not only as a source of norms but also as a brand value with economic appeal (Anglin et al., 2023). Therefore, this study provides a theoretical contribution to understanding how Muslim-majority countries utilize religion as a development strategy and an instrument of economic diplomacy.

By focusing on the construction of state discourse, this research offers a more nuanced intellectual contribution than conventional approaches that view the halal industry solely as an economic entity. This discourse approach allows for a more critical and reflective analysis of how power operates through language, how the state uses religious symbols to establish legitimacy, and how the dynamics of sharia development are produced within the realm of representation (Fuadi, 2024). This research also provides practical contributions to the government in formulating a more inclusive, transparent, and responsive communication strategy for halal development.

The study of KIHIC is not only empirically important, but also theoretically and politically. It opens up space for understanding the complex relationships between religion, the state, capitalism, and the media, while filling a gap in the literature regarding the role of state discourse in mobilizing religion as a development capital. Thus, this research seeks not only to answer the question of how KIHIC is framed by the state, but also how that frame works in producing the social reality of halal development in the Indonesian context and within the global landscape of the religious economy.

## METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis (CDA) method combined with a constructionist perspective on the state. This methodology is based on the assumption that development is not only a material process, but also a symbolic and discursive process shaped by relations of power, language, and institutions (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, to understand how the state constructs religion as a means of development in the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) project, an approach is needed that can explain the dynamics of meaning production through language while simultaneously uncovering the power practices that govern the relationship between religion, the state, and development. The constructionist approach to the state—as explained by Mitchell (2002)—positions the state not as a monolithic entity, but rather as the effect of a network of discursive practices that produce perceptions of authority, legitimacy, and social reality (Mitchell, 2002). The integration of CDA with state constructionism allows this research to simultaneously explain how state discourse is produced, disseminated, and reproduced through policy documents, official media, and promotional materials for halal development.

The research data sources comprise three main types, strategically selected to capture the diversity of the fields of production of religion-development discourse. First, policy documents such as the 2019–2024 Indonesian Sharia Economic Masterplan, the Halal Product Guarantee Law, and its implementing regulations serve as important data sources to examine how the state formulates a conceptual framework for halal development and positions religion within the national economic policy structure. These policy documents serve not only as regulatory instruments but also as ideological texts that shape the public's interpretive horizon of the halal industry as part of the national development agenda (Marnita, 2024). Second, this study utilizes official media

texts, specifically press releases from the [bantenprov.go.id](http://bantenprov.go.id) portal for the 2019–2024 period. Government press releases are a medium systematically used by the state to produce formal representations of development projects, thus containing narrative constructions that explicitly link religiosity to modernization, industrialization, and economic growth (Gessese et al., 2022). Third, this research also utilizes promotional content, including social media posts from @bantenprov and campaign materials for "The Future of Halal Industry." These contents were chosen because they serve as a more flexible and performative arena for the production of meaning, where the state presents a futuristic image of the halal industry as a symbol of progress and religious pride.

Data collection was conducted using purposive sampling, which selectively selects data based on their relevance to the research focus. This technique was chosen because this study does not attempt statistical generalizations, but rather explores the construction of discourse that explicitly links religious values to the development agenda (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Therefore, all texts analyzed were those that directly contain terms, metaphors, or narratives reflecting the relationship between religion and development, such as "halal industry as the future of the nation's economy," "development based on sharia values," "religiosity-based economic transformation," or other technocratic terms containing religious symbolic meaning. This criteria-based text selection provides a sharp analytical focus and ensures that the analyzed data are truly related to the research objectives.

The data analysis technique was carried out through three iterative integrative stages, following the tradition of critical discourse analysis. The first stage is Textual Analysis, which is an in-depth reading of the linguistic structure of the text, including analysis of lexicon, metaphor, diction, argumentation patterns, and narrative constructions that appear in policy documents, press releases, and promotional content. In this stage, the research examines how religion is represented—whether as a moral value, an instrument of legitimacy, a symbolic asset, or economic capital—and how development is depicted as technological, futuristic, or religious. This method follows Fairclough's (1995) microanalytic framework, which positions language as an arena where power relations are produced and negotiated (Fairclough, 1995).

The second stage is discursive analysis, which identifies broader discourse formations related to the production of the narrative of "religion as development capital." This analysis includes tracing recurring patterns, dominant framing, binary oppositions used (e.g., traditional vs. modern, local vs. global, religious vs. secular), and intertextuality strategies that connect the current text to previous policy documents, national agendas, or global economic discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). At this stage, the research also maps how the discourse of halal development shapes the image of the state as a modern, religious, and progressive actor, as well as a regulator of sharia legitimacy. In other words, discursive analysis highlights how state discourse operates at the macro level in framing the social reality of development.

The third stage is State Construction Analysis, which explains how the state—through discursive representations—constructs its position as an authoritative agent of development. Referring to Mitchell's (2002) argument, the state is understood as something that "emerges" through representations and practices, rather than as a materially existing entity (Mitchell, 2002). Therefore, this stage of analysis examines how the state positions itself in the text: whether as a protector of religious values, a driver of modernization, a regulator of halal legitimacy, or as a link between religious identity and global capitalism. This analysis also examines mechanisms of legitimacy, such as the use of religious jargon, claims of morality, or technocratic representations that combine sharia with industrial technology. This approach allows the research to uncover how the production of state discourse in the KIHIC project functions to expand the state's political and symbolic authority in the realm of halal development.

To maintain the validity and reliability of the findings, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing various types of texts—policy documents, press releases, and social media content—to ensure consistency of discourse and avoid bias from a single source (Patton, 2002). Method triangulation, meanwhile, combined textual analysis, discursive analysis, and state construction analysis to generate a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of religion-development discourse. Furthermore, the analysis process was conducted continuously, with analytical memos recorded to maintain consistency of interpretation and avoid researcher bias. Thus, this research methodology is designed to provide a sharp analysis of how the state mobilizes religion as a development capital through the production of discourse, while simultaneously explaining the political implications of this construction in the contemporary Indonesian context.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Instrumentalization of Religious Symbols as a Source of Political Legitimacy

The first finding of this study shows that the state uses religion—specifically Islamic symbols, values, and narratives—as an instrument of political legitimacy to strengthen the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) development project. This instrumentalization of religion does not occur sporadically, but is a planned and integrated discursive strategy through policy documents, government press releases, and digital campaigns. This finding confirms the argument that modern states often rely on cultural and religious symbols to obtain moral justification for economic policies, especially when these policies touch on the realm of collective identity (Migdal, 2001). Thus, religion, which is normatively understood as a source of spiritual meaning, is transformed into symbolic capital that can be mobilized for the benefit of development and political stability.

An analysis of policy documents—particularly the Indonesian Sharia Economic Masterplan 2019–2024—shows that the state is not only promoting the halal sector as an economic strategy but also actively linking it to a religious national vision. Within it, sharia is not treated as a normative religious domain, but as a paradigm for national development (Kasri & Ahmed, 2019). This integration of sharia into public policy demonstrates that the state is building what Fairclough (1995) calls ideological embedding, the process by which cultural or religious values are embedded into official discourse to provide legitimacy (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, the KIHIC project is positioned not merely as economic infrastructure but as a representation of the state's commitment to Islamic values and evidence of its responsiveness to the religious aspirations of the Muslim community.

Local government press releases demonstrate a consistent pattern. In one of the KIHIC inauguration speeches, the Governor of Banten asserted that the area is a “tangible manifestation of the practice of sharia values in economic development.” This statement is analytically significant because it contains a dual discursive operation. First, it positions the state as a religious actor—not merely an administrative entity—capable of “practicing” Islamic values (Islam & Saidul Islam, 2018). Second, it positions development projects as directly derived from religious teachings. This narrative reinforces Bourdieu's (1991) claim that symbolic capital operates through misrecognition, namely when society no longer sees state policies as the product of political calculations, but as something “natural” and morally “right” (Bourdieu et al., 1991). By framing KIHIC as collective worship, the state affirms its position as both the guardian of public morality and the actor “most qualified” to make decisions regarding the direction of development.

This instrumentalization strategy is more explicitly seen in the analysis of metaphors found in media texts and promotional materials for KIHIC. Several frequently used metaphors, such as “the lighthouse of Indonesia's sharia economy,” “the bridge to blessed prosperity,” or “the gateway to the world's halal economy,” carry strong symbolic weight. These metaphors combine religious language (such as blessing) with modern development imaginaries (lighthouse, bridge, gateway), resulting in what Lakoff and Johnson call a metaphorical mapping between two domains of meaning. Through this mechanism, the state creates an emotional association that the halal industry is not simply an economic sector, but a path to glory and prosperity in accordance with divine will (Isti'annah et al., 2025). The combination of religious and development metaphors also strengthens the effect of authority, as these symbols demonstrate that state development aligns with moral imperatives considered universal by Muslim societies (Stark & Finke, 2000).

What is interesting is that this instrumentalization is not only carried out at the structural level of the state, but also at the affective level through digital campaigns. An analysis of the official Instagram account @bantenprov reveals a communication pattern that consistently links religious values with development motivations. For example, one post features a hadith quote about the importance of honesty in trade, accompanied by a visual illustration of the KIHIC area and the caption: “The Prophet Muhammad taught about halal and thayyib business. KIHIC embodies this teaching on an industrial scale.” This type of content not only articulates the relationship between religious values and development but also produces what Rudnyckyj calls pious neoliberalism—the integration of pious values with a capitalist work ethic (Mosièrè, 2022). At this point, society is not only encouraged to accept development but to interpret economic participation as part of their religious identity (Anggadwita et al., 2021).

Theoretically, this strategy aligns with Migdal's (2001) view of the state as a social boundary maker, an entity that shapes social reality through normative and symbolic claims (Migdal, 2001). The state not only imposes technocratic rules but also creates a value horizon that determines what society deems “right,” “good,” and “reasonable.” In the context of KIHIC, the state constructs a symbolic boundary that establishes the halal

industry as the best moral choice for Muslims, making acceptance of the project a form of piety. This process demonstrates a subtle but effective ideological operation (Brand et al., 2021).

At a deeper level, the instrumentalization of religious symbols for political legitimacy can also be seen as part of a structural coupling strategy between religion and development. The state actively associates itself with religious values to maintain political legitimacy, particularly amidst the growing awareness of religious identity in post-Reformasi Indonesia (Liu et al., 2022). By adopting a positive and modern Islamic narrative, the state not only avoids tensions with conservative religious groups but also claims a central position as a mediator of the interests of the community (Alfurqan et al., 2025). In contemporary Indonesian identity politics, the state's claim to religious narratives constitutes a form of "moral securitization," where religion is used to construct the perception that the state is protecting the values and identities of the majority (Hidayah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the production of religious narratives about development also serves to create development affect, namely a sense of pride, hope, and emotional involvement in the project (Wu et al., 2021). When people believe that KIHIC is not just an economic project but a religious one, they become more easily mobilized and less likely to criticize the policy. Criticism of halal industry projects, for example regarding land concessions, the involvement of large investors, or environmental impacts, becomes perceived as criticism of religion itself. This is the political power of religious instrumentalization: it not only builds legitimacy but also closes off space for criticism (Bentzen & Gokmen, 2023).

Furthermore, the government's narrative regarding the halal industry as "the people's contribution to the nation" illustrates the integration of religion into the discourse of economic nationalism. Here, religion does not stand in opposition to the state, but is instead integrated to strengthen the national project. This configuration is reminiscent of Chatterjee's thesis on political society, where the state embraces the cultural values of the community to secure their support for developmentalist programs (Chatterjee, 2013). In the context of the KIHIC, the state constructs an image of Muslims as key partners in development, and therefore, support for the halal industry becomes a form of religious patriotism.

Ultimately, the findings of this study demonstrate that the instrumentalization of religious symbols is a highly effective discursive strategy in producing political legitimacy for the KIHIC project. The state successfully positioned itself as both the protector of Islamic values and the driver of modern development, resulting in a dual configuration of legitimacy: religious legitimacy and technocratic legitimacy (Mowlana, 2018). This integration makes the KIHIC project appear not only as an economic strategy, but also as a national "moral agenda." However, this strategy carries critical implications, particularly the risk of reducing religion to a mere political tool for development. As Abu-Rabi' (2004) warns, when religion is drawn into the logic of capitalism and state development, there is the potential for a narrowing of the meaning of religion, which was previously rich in social critique and ethics of justice (Abu-Rabi', 2004).

### **Converting Religious Capital into Economic Capital: The Mechanism of Religious Productization**

The findings of these two studies indicate that the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) project presents a systematic mechanism for converting religious capital—whether in the form of values, symbols, institutions, or religious networks—into productive economic capital. This conversion is not merely a technical process, but rather a socio-cultural process that occurs through the interaction of state policies, industrial infrastructure, and Islamic economic narratives (Affandi & Yafiz, 2025). The results of this study indicate that this conversion of religious capital does not simply occur naturally but is engineered through regulatory structures, discursive practices, and the formation of religious identities aligned with market orientation. This process aligns with Stark and Finke's (2000) argument that religious capital has the potential to be transformed into other forms of capital, including economic capital, when a favorable institutional framework is in place (Stark & Finke, 2000).

An analysis of the Indonesian Sharia Economic Masterplan 2019–2024 shows that the government has formulated a policy framework that explicitly identifies the economic potential of religious resources. In this document, religious values such as halal (permissible), thayyib (good), amanah (trustworthy), and blessings are positioned as competitive advantages to strengthen Indonesia's competitiveness in the global market. In other words, this document not only maps out a strategy for industrializing the halal sector but also establishes an ideological foundation that religion can and should be an economic resource. From a political economy perspective, this reflects a process that Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) call ethno-capitalism: the commodification

of cultural identities and values as a strategy for state development (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). The KIHIC project emerged as a concrete laboratory of this process.

Regulations regarding halal certification have become a key channel for converting religious capital into economic capital. Through the Halal Product Assurance Law (UU JPH), the moral obligation of Muslims to consume halal products has been transformed into a legal obligation binding on all businesses in Indonesia. This transformation shifts halal from a mere ethical category to a market requirement, creating new markets, new value chains, and new service industries—from halal inspection agencies and halal auditors to regulatory consultants (Boelt et al., 2015). Thus, the state actively creates a legal infrastructure that enables religious capital to be exchanged in the formal economic market (Ercanbrack, 2024). This conversion demonstrates a dual logic: the state fulfills the moral mandate of the community while simultaneously opening up investment opportunities in the halal industry.

Physical infrastructure such as KIHIC serves as the material medium for this conversion process. These industrial areas not only provide land and production facilities but also operationalize religious values in the form of operational standards, industrial governance, and halal supply chains. Thus, halal values are embodied in machinery, buildings, logistics systems, and certification schemes. Halal exists not merely as a belief or ritual practice, but as an infrastructural regime that regulates how goods are produced, stored, distributed, and marketed (Wainaina et al., 2023). This reinforces Larkin's (2013) thesis that infrastructure is not a neutral entity, but rather a "morally-laden object" that can shape social and economic behavior (Larkin, 2013).

The conversion process also occurs through the production of narratives by state media and Islamic economic actors. These narratives position piety as capital in the business world. Government digital content often links an individual's religious qualities—such as trustworthiness, halal (lawful), and *thayyib* (good)—with the ability to compete in the global economy. In one KIHIC promotional post, the government stated that "halal business is not only profitable, but also brings blessings to those who do it." This narrative operationalizes what Rudnyckyj calls spiritual capitalism, the integration of religious ethos with capitalist productivity (Rudnyckyj, 2011). This narrative not only encourages businesses to join the halal ecosystem but also creates the perception that not taking advantage of halal economic opportunities is wasting existing religious values.

Theoretically, this conversion of religious capital involves mechanisms that can be explained through Pierre Bourdieu's capital framework (LeBlanc, 2021). Religious capital encompasses elements of moral legitimacy, social recognition, and belief structures widely recognized by Muslim societies (Abbas et al., 2024). When the state and the market recognize these values as having added economic value, a process of legitimate conversion occurs, namely the transfer of values from one domain to another with the support of ruling institutions (Bourdieu, 1991). In the context of KIHIC, the state functions as a mediator, ensuring that the conversion is legitimate, in accordance with religious norms, and beneficial to national development.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the process of converting religious capital also functions to shape specific economic subjects. The state narrative positions Muslim entrepreneurs as "religious economic actors" who are required to integrate Islamic ethics with economic productivity (Jaafar & Brightman, 2022). Thus, piety is no longer solely associated with ritual worship practices but is also measured through participation in the halal economic sector. This concept aligns with Mahmood's (2005) notion of ethical self-fashioning, but in the context of KIHIC, religious ethics are shaped not through moral traditions or religious communities, but rather through market logic and state development projects. Individuals are encouraged to interpret piety through their participation in halal supply chains and Sharia-compliant industries (S. Mahmood, 2005).

This study also found that the process of converting religious capital has implications for the industry structure itself. With the mandatory halal certification, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are forced to enter the complex ecosystem of halal industry standards. On the one hand, this provides opportunities for quality improvement and global market access. However, on the other hand, it creates a new hierarchy in which those with the resources to meet halal standards gain greater advantages than smaller economic actors unable to meet the technical and administrative requirements. This process demonstrates the economization of piety—where only certain parties can access the economic benefits of capitalized religious values (Osella & Rudnyckyj, 2017).

Globally, the conversion of religious capital into economic capital in the context of the halal industry not only drives domestic economic growth but also serves as a strategic positioning point for Indonesia in the global economic landscape (Qizam et al., 2025). The global halal industry is predicted to reach trillions of dollars in value, and Indonesia seeks to join this network through halal standards, international cooperation, and industry promotion. The KIHIC symbolizes Indonesia's position as not only the largest market for halal products but also a producer capable of competing globally. Thus, the country seeks to transform the religious identity of the majority

of its population into a competitive advantage in the global market. This phenomenon aligns with Mandaville's (2022) argument regarding the geopolitical transformation of Islam in the digital economy and global trade (Mandaville & Hamid, 2022).

However, this conversion process also carries risks. When religious values become economic raw materials, the meaning of religion is narrowed. Religion is reduced to a mechanism for creating added economic value, while the dimensions of social ethics, moral criticism, and justice inherent in religious traditions are potentially marginalized. This is as warned by Abu-Rabi' (2004), who sees the threat when religion is drawn into the logic of capitalism and development: religion loses its prophetic character and is transformed into a mere "spiritual commodity." (Abu-Rabi', 2004).

Thus, the findings of this study demonstrate that the conversion of religious capital into economic capital is not merely an economic process, but a complex political, cultural, and moral one. The state, the market, and religious institutions collaborate in producing a halal industrial ecosystem that utilizes religious values as an economic resource. The result is a new form of religious productization, a situation in which religion becomes an integral element of the production, regulation, and consumption processes in the modern economy (Jurado-Caraballo & Rodríguez-Fernández, 2021). This process confirms that in the contemporary Indonesian context, religion is no longer merely a cultural expression but also a strategic instrument in capitalist development projects.

### **The Production of Religious Development Narratives: Developmentalism as Worship**

The most important finding of this study is the emergence of a new pattern in the construction of development discourse in Indonesia: religious developmentalism. In this pattern, public participation in state development projects—including halal industrial estate projects like KIH— is framed not merely as a civic obligation or an economic choice, but as an expression of piety and even a form of worship. In other words, development is no longer solely positioned within the framework of modern economics but is embedded within the moral and religious fabric of Muslims. The state, through its media apparatus, public policy, and symbolic narratives, constructs a new identity: a devout, developmentalist Muslim subject who complies with regulations and supports the state's economic vision. This signals a fundamental transformation in the relationship between religion, economics, and power (Tolz & Hutchings, 2023).

Theoretically, this process can be understood through the concept of governmentality developed by Michel Foucault. According to Foucault (1991), modern power operates not simply through coercion or regulation, but through the formation of subjects who voluntarily conform to the rationality produced by the state (Foucault, 1991). In the context of KIH, this rationality is the rationality of development: economic growth, halal standardization, and increased national competitiveness. When the development narrative is combined with Islamic values, the state is essentially creating a self-governance mechanism where Muslims adhere to the logic of development not because of formal coercion, but because of the belief that it is part of religious ethics (Janssen et al., 2023).

This narrative is evident in government social media content, particularly on Instagram, YouTube, and the province's official website. In one KIH campaign video, a Muslim businessman is interviewed, stating that "investing in KIH is not only profitable, but also an act of worship because it supports the people's economy." Such statements are not neutral; they create a new moral economy in which economic activity aligned with the state's agenda is given religious legitimacy. As Scott (1998) notes, the modern state continually strives to make social reality legible—readable, measurable, and manageable (Scott, 1998). In the case of KIH, "development success" is measured not only by the amount of investment or gross regional domestic product, but also by religious indicators such as the number of halal-certified products and the number of participating Muslim businesses.

This narrative of religious development did not emerge out of thin air. It was produced through a combination of three main strategies: (1) framing development as a moral obligation, (2) religious symbolism within economic projects, and (3) integrating the values of worship into the ethos of halal industrial capitalism.

First, development is framed as a moral obligation. In various speeches by government officials, including the Governor of Banten at the inauguration of the KIH, the development of the halal industrial zone was presented as "part of the economic jihad of the people." The term jihad here has clearly shifted in meaning. It no longer refers to moral or spiritual defense but is instead incorporated into the framework of national capitalism that emphasizes growth and capital accumulation. As Bayat (2013) theorizes, modern regimes often use religious language to create "moral politics" that justify economic agendas (Bayat, 2013). Thus, the development of the KIH is understood as a path to prosperity that is not only desirable but morally obligatory.

Second, the state produces religious symbols attached to economic projects. KIHIC has been called the "lighthouse of Indonesian sharia economics," a term that combines spiritual metaphors with development logic. This symbolization is an exercise of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), namely the state's ability to produce social meanings that are accepted as normal. Through this symbol, the state seeks to ensure that the halal industry is not only an economic sector but also a representation of collective religious commitment. Other metaphors frequently appearing in promotional leaflets and narratives, such as "the path to blessed prosperity," demonstrate how the language of development is infused with spirituality to be more persuasive and resonate with the community's Muslim identity (Razzaq, 2023).

Third, the narrative of religious development is integrated into the ethos of capitalist productivity. This aligns with the phenomenon of Islamic neoliberalism, which has begun to be widely discussed in contemporary literature (T. Mahmood, 2020). In this context, piety is no longer understood exclusively in terms of ritual worship, but rather in terms of economic performativity: working hard, investing, producing halal goods, and meeting industrial standards are all presented as actualizations of Islamic values (Rudnycky, 2019). The state, through the KIHIC project, creates a new epistemology of worship—namely, worship as participation in national economic development. Thus, market logic enters the spiritual sphere, while spiritual values are used to expand market logic.

This process of religious developmentalism also creates a new form of citizenship. In state discourse, a good citizen not only obeys the law but also contributes to the halal industry. This aligns with Fischer's concept of pious citizenship, where civic identity is framed within a specific moral paradigm (Sander et al., 2017). KIHIC serves not only as an industrial space but also as a space for identity production, where Muslims are taught to harmoniously combine religious and developmental ethics.

In the analysis of discursive production, the state uses affective governance techniques to build public emotional attachment to the KIHIC project. Visual content such as video testimonials, photographs of halal factories, and narratives of blessings accompanying each KIHIC development create what Anderson (1991) calls a new imagined community: the halal development community (Anderson, 1991). This community is bound not only by Islamic identity but also by a sense of pride in sharia economic development. This produces what Tsing (2005) calls an economy of appearances, where narratives of progress, blessings, and a bright future are used to attract public support and investment (Tsing, 2005).

In practical terms, this narrative of religious developmentalism creates a subtle mechanism of social control. Communities that do not support KIHIC or criticize the excesses of halal development can be positioned as less "pious," less "supportive of the community," or even perceived as not understanding the importance of halal nationalism. Thus, the production of religious development narratives creates moral boundaries that govern collective action. This aligns with the concept of moral regulation proposed by Hunt (1999), where the state creates certain moral norms to ensure social order consistent with its political agenda (Hunt, 1999).

From a global perspective, this phenomenon of religious developmentalism is not isolated. Countries such as Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey have also developed halal development narratives based on integrating religious identity into industrialization strategies. However, the Indonesian context is unique. With the world's largest Muslim majority, the country faces both the opportunity and pressure to convert this religious identity into geopolitical and economic capital. Indonesia seeks to position itself as a global halal hub, and the religious development narrative serves as an instrument to legitimize this ambition. As Mandaville (2022) notes, in the era of global capitalism, Muslim identity is not merely a cultural category but a strategic resource in international political economy (Mandaville & Hamid, 2022).

However, the production of this narrative of religious development leaves behind several critical problems. First, it has the potential to reduce Islam to a mere instrument of economics and development, ignoring Islam's ethical-critical dimension, which is oriented towards social justice and supports marginalized groups. Second, it creates a gap between those who are able to participate in the halal industry (with sufficient economic and technical capital) and those who are not. Third, it integrates religion into the mechanisms of capitalism, which historically often leads to commodification and the loss of spiritual meaning (Abu-Rabi', 2004).

The findings of this study indicate that the development of KIHIC is not merely an economic phenomenon, but an ideological project that integrates religion, state, and market within a single narrative: the narrative that development is worship. This narrative shapes new identities, new moral structures, and new mechanisms of power within Indonesian Muslim society. In this context, religious developmentalism is a key characteristic of Islamic political economy in contemporary Indonesia, which requires critical examination to avoid trapping religion within the logic of capitalism, which ignores the dimensions of justice and equality.

To clarify the relationship between the three main findings of the study—namely the instrumentalization of religious symbols, the conversion of religious capital, and the production of religious development narratives—the following table is compiled to systematically map how these three processes operate as an ecology of power in the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) development project. This presentation not only shows conceptual differentiation but also outlines points of intersection, working mechanisms, actors involved, and their ideological implications for the relationship between the state, religion, and the economy. Thus, this table serves as an analytical framework that integrates the research findings in a coherent and easily understood comparative format.

Table 1. Analytical Research Findings

| Analysis Aspects    | Instrumentalization of Religious Symbols                                              | Conversion of Religious Capital into Economic Capital                                    | The Production of Religious Development Narratives (Religious Developmentalism)            |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Main Focus          | The use of religious symbols, language, and rituals as a source of legitimacy         | Transformation of religious values and practices into commodities and economic resources | Framing development as part of religious worship and identity                              |
| Dominant Actor      | Local government, government public relations, political elite                        | State, ministry related to sharia economy, halal certification body                      | Government, state media, halal industry players                                            |
| Main Mechanism      | Religious rhetoric, religious metaphors, digital campaigns                            | Halal regulations, halal infrastructure, sharia economic narrative                       | Religious storytelling - development, testimony, emotional visual content                  |
| Concrete Example    | KIHIC is called the “lighthouse of Islamic economics”, the use of hadith in promotion | Halal Product Guarantee Law, KIHIC as a value conversion infrastructure                  | Investor testimonial: “investing and worshipping at the same time”                         |
| Theoretical Basis   | Migdal (state legitimacy), Bourdieu (capital simbolik)                                | Stark & Finke (religious capital), Osella & Rudnykyj (spiritual economies)               | Scott (legibility), Foucault (governmentality), Abu-Rabi' (critique of Islamic capitalism) |
| Indirect Goals      | Building public trust in development projects                                         | Creating a new economic ecosystem based on religiosity                                   | Producing Muslim subjects who comply with the development agenda                           |
| Ideological Effects | Normalization of the role of the state as guardian of religion                        | Religious education becomes an instrument of production                                  | Naturalization of capitalism as part of Islamic teachings                                  |
| Social Impact       | Increasing Symbolic Support for the KIHIC Project                                     | The formation of a large-scale halal market and consumption                              | Blurring the boundaries between economic interests and religious obligations               |
| Risks and Criticism | Excessive politicization of religion can create an exclusive bias                     | The commodification of religion can reduce the critical dimension of Islam               | Ignoring the dimensions of Islamic social ethics such as justice and redistribution        |
| Discursive Output   | Moral legitimacy of KIHIC                                                             | Expansion of the halal industry                                                          | The formation of “developmentalist Muslims”                                                |

Table 1 shows that these three phenomena operate not as separate entities, but as a series of mutually reinforcing processes within the KIHIC development project. The instrumentalization of religious symbols provides moral legitimacy, making development policies accepted as not only economically rational but also religiously correct (Salemink, 2015). This legitimacy then opens up space for the conversion of religious capital into economic capital, positioning religion as a resource that can be monetized through regulations, infrastructure, and narratives of spiritual added value.

In the next stage, these two processes culminated in the production of religious developmentalism—a discursive formation that frames participation in development as part of Islamic worship and identity. This framing not only strengthens the state's ability to direct societal behavior but also shapes new Muslim subjects who

internalize the logic of development as part of their religious ethos (Sandal, 2021). In other words, the table shows how KIHIC became a socio-political laboratory where religion served not only as a legitimation but also as an economic instrument and moral framework for development.

## CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the development of the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) is not simply an economic project, but rather an arena where the state, religion, and capitalism are intertwined in a complex and productive relationship. Key findings reveal that the state not only utilizes religion as a source of legitimacy but also organizes religion as an economic resource and shapes the community's religious identity through development narratives. Thus, KIHIC becomes a practical field where power operates simultaneously through symbols, regulations, and discourse.

First, the research demonstrates the instrumentalization of religious symbols as a strategy for state legitimacy. Local governments and bureaucratic officials systematically use religious symbols, metaphors, and terminology to frame KIHIC as a project that is not only economically beneficial but also religiously valuable. By positioning development as a manifestation of a commitment to Islamic values, the state gains moral legitimacy, expanding its capacity to command public support. This finding reinforces Migdal's view that the state often utilizes dominant values to establish its political legitimacy and supports Bourdieu's notion that power operates through the creation and distribution of "symbolic capital."

Second, the research confirms that the KIHIC project operates through a mechanism of converting religious capital into economic capital, making religion not only a source of meaning but also a productive resource. Halal regulations, halal industrial infrastructure, and narratives about the Islamic economy become channels through which religious values are systematically capitalized. This process aligns with Stark and Finke's thesis on the convertibility of religious capital, but extends it through the context of the Indonesian developmental state, where the state plays a dominant role in designing the economic-religious framework. In this context, religion undergoes what Osella and Rudnyckij call "productization," the transformation of spiritual values into manageable and measurable economic energy.

Third, the study found that the state produced a religious development narrative that created a new identity: the developmentalist Muslim. Through digital campaigns, business testimonials, and development rhetoric, participation in the KIHIC was positioned as a form of worship. This demonstrates how power operates within the realm of subjectivity through mechanisms of governmentality—where society is directed to internalize development as a moral and religious obligation. These findings also reveal the naturalization of capitalism as part of Islamic teachings, a tendency widely criticized by contemporary Muslim thinkers for obscuring the social justice dimension of the Islamic tradition.

This study concludes that KIHIC is a concrete example of religious developmentalism, a development model that combines capitalist economic logic with religious symbols and values to create political legitimacy, social participation, and religious awareness in line with the state's agenda. This model demonstrates the state's effectiveness in utilizing religious ecology to produce political stability while simultaneously driving the economy. However, this study also underscores that such a model carries serious risks, particularly related to the commodification of religion, the reduction of Islamic values to economic instruments, and the potential marginalization of the ethical-critical dimension of religion that should question inequality, injustice, and social exclusion.

Thus, this study not only demonstrates how religion operates within the context of contemporary development but also invites reflection on its place within Indonesia's political-economic landscape. The key question that arises is: to what extent can religion continue to be a source of legitimacy and productivity without losing its critical role? This question opens up space for further research that explores the dynamics between religion, capitalism, and power in the context of an increasingly digitalized and socially differentiated Indonesia.

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