

The politics of religious commodification: Representation of power in the Cikande halal industrial zone

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the Banten Provincial Government's halal discourse in press releases, social media, and Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) promotions (2019–2024) using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Findings reveal halal discourse as a power apparatus that commodifies religion, blending religious lexicon ("halal," "shariah," "blessing") with economic metaphors ("global hub," "qiblat") to legitimize industrial modernity. At textual and discursive levels, the state circulates narratives via institutional channels, fostering inevitability around halal industrialization and replacing coercion with persuasion. Socially, it forges a state-religion-capital triad, yielding "dual legitimacy"—moral via religious symbols, economic via investment promises—while crafting market-oriented pious consumers, sidelining justice, labor, and ecology. The study advances scholarship on religious commodification, state hegemony, and halal political economy, portraying halal discourse as governmentality merging morality and markets in Indonesia.

Keywords: Capitalism; Critical Discourse Analysis; halal industry; political economy; religious commodification.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's contemporary political economy has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades, particularly through the strengthening of the halal industry as a strategic sector of national development. While previously, halal discourse focused primarily on consumer jurisprudence, product certification, and religious regulations, it has now evolved into a grand narrative integrating the logic of religion, the state, and capital (Fischer, 2016). This transformation did not occur in a vacuum, but was influenced by the global wave of "halalization," which has constructed halal as an economic commodity, a symbol of identity politics, and an instrument of international market competition (Rudnycky, 2019). Thus, halal is no longer merely a theological category but has become part of an infrastructure of power involving the state, corporations, and religious authorities.

In this context, the development of the Cikande Halal Industrial Estate (KIHC) in Serang Regency, Banten Province, occupies a strategic position as a mega-project projected to accelerate halal industrialization. KIHC is not only framed as an industrial area providing production facilities that meet halal standards, but is also represented as a symbol of Islamic modernity, industrial innovation, and the future of regional economic development. The Banten Provincial Government, through a massive campaign with the slogan "Banten: The Future of Halal Industry," repeatedly emphasized that KIHC is a form of "moral and religious commitment" to creating an industrial ecosystem that is halal, thayyib, and globally competitive. This narrative continues to be produced through official government channels, from the news portal bantenprov.go.id, Instagram posts @bantenprov, to various national investment forums. Thus, KIHC appears not merely as an economic project, but as a social text that represents the struggle for meaning, interests, and claims to power (Miller, 2024).

This phenomenon raises several critical questions. First, how is the discourse on religiosity mobilized by the state in the KIHC project? Second, how are religious symbols and terminology constructed as legitimators of development, creating what has been called a religionized development discourse? Third, how does this discourse function as an instrument of power representation, both in shaping the government's image and in shaping Muslim subjects in accordance with the logic of developmentalism? These questions are crucial given that the halal industry cannot be separated from the dynamics of identity politics, symbolic economy, and power relations in contemporary Muslim society.

Several previous studies have made important contributions to understanding the development of the halal industry in Indonesia. Miskiyah and Hidayat (2020), for example, examined the economic potential of the halal industry and highlighted export opportunities for Indonesian halal commodities (Miskiyah & Hidayat, 2020). Meanwhile, Nurhayati and Suryana (2022) focused on the effectiveness of halal certification in increasing the competitiveness of MSME products (Nurhayati & Suryana, 2022). These studies enrich our understanding of the economic and regulatory aspects of the halal industry, but tend to overlook the discursive dimensions, representations of power, and symbolic politics that accompany the development of halal industrial zones. In other words, research on the halal industry has been predominantly oriented toward technocratic aspects, such as regulation, supply chain management, and market potential, leaving a research gap regarding how the state uses religious discourse to establish political and economic legitimacy through the halal industry.

In global literature, studies on the commodification of religion have highlighted how religious symbols, values, and practices are often systematically processed within the logic of the market and development (Jain, 2022). However, the Indonesian context is unique, as the state plays an active role in institutionalizing religion in public policy, particularly through the concept of sharia economics, as enshrined in the 2019–2024 Sharia Economic Masterplan. This is where the KIHC (Islamic Community Empowerment) becomes strategic as an empirical case study: it represents a space where state, religion, and capital meet, discursively manifested through state media. Therefore, investigating the KIHC discourse is crucial for understanding how the state shapes public perceptions, mobilizes faith, and produces legitimacy through development narratives imbued with religiosity.

In the context of discourse analysis, the government not only conveys information but also forms certain structures of meaning, which Fairclough (1995) calls ideological-discursive formations. The discourse produced by the state through official media is not merely a representation, but a social practice that actively produces power relations (Fairclough, 1995). The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach positions language as an instrument of power, where word choice, metaphors, and narrative structures can construct the social world in a particular way and benefit certain parties (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Through this approach, research on KIHC examines not only what is said, but also how, in what context, and for whose benefit the discourse is produced.

In government media campaigns, KIHC is often represented through religious metaphors such as "Indonesia's halal lighthouse," "sharia industrial park," or "the path to economic blessing." These metaphors are not neutral; they serve as tools for building a moral economy that links industrial development to the values of worship and piety (Kazanoğlu & Ketola, 2022). On the other hand, the government presents itself as not only technocratically competent but also religiously committed, thus gaining symbolic legitimacy from the Muslim community (de Bruin-Wassinkmaat et al., 2021). This demonstrates that KIHC's representation in the media is not merely informative but also political.

At the same time, the religious narrative inherent in KIHC serves as a mechanism for the formation of a new Muslim subject—one who is not only ritually devout but also productive, competitive, and supportive of the nation's development projects. This representation aligns with what Rudnyckyj (2019) calls spiritual economies, where religion is used as a technology of self-management to increase economic productivity (Rudnyckyj, 2019).

Thus, KIHIC is not only a physical project but also an ideological one, aiming to shape Muslim citizens in line with the logic of sharia capitalism and the vision of national development.

From this explanation, it is clear that there is an analytical gap (research gap) between technocratic-industrial studies of the halal sector and critical studies of how the state constructs power through religious discourse. This gap is what this research aims to fill. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical and methodological framework, this study positions KIHIC as a discursive object, not simply a material object. This approach allows researchers to understand the complex relationships between language, power, and ideology that shape media representations of the halal project.

Specifically, this study has three main objectives. First, it identifies and analyzes the linguistic and symbolic strategies used by the government in producing discourse on KIHIC. Second, it uncovers the political-economic interests underlying the construction of this discourse, including how the state uses religious symbols to gain legitimacy and public support. Third, it analyzes how KIHIC discourse contributes to the formation of contemporary Muslim subjects and the strengthening of state power in the development process.

Thus, this research not only makes a theoretical contribution to the study of religion and development discourse, but also offers relevant empirical insights into how the Indonesian state utilizes the politics of religious commodification as a strategy for representing power. This understanding is crucial in the context of the increasing integration of religion into public policy, as well as in the global context where religion, identity, and capital continue to be intertwined in the modern public sphere.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative approach with Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, which emphasizes the relationship between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 1995). This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal how discourse regarding the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) is constructed, distributed, and interpreted in the context of relations between the state, capital, and religion. The research data are sourced from official texts produced by the Banten Provincial Government for the 2019–2024 period, including press releases on the bantenprov.go.id portal, social media posts from the @bantenprov account on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter/X, as well as various promotional materials such as brochures, pamphlets, and KIHIC company profile videos. All data were collected through a purposive sampling technique using the keywords "Cikande Halal Industrial Zone", "KIHIC", and "The Future of Halal Industry" to ensure direct relevance to the research focus (Patton, 2015).

Data analysis was conducted in three main stages as formulated by Fairclough. First, text analysis (description) that examines linguistic aspects such as lexicon selection, argument structure, metaphor, and rhetoric to identify how terms such as sharia, halal, modern, or global are used to construct a particular image of KIHIC (Fairclough, 2010). Second, analysis of discourse practices (interpretation) that examines the process of production, distribution, and consumption of discourse, including who produces the text, what interests underlie it, and how audiences interpret the message in the context of national sharia economic policy (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Third, analysis of social practices (explanation) that connects the promotional discourse of KIHIC with broader social structures, particularly the power relations between the state and halal industry actors, and how these relations influence the formation of religiosity meaning in the public sphere (Van Dijk, 2006).

Through these three stages, the research does not merely read the text as information, but as an arena for the production of meaning fraught with socio-political interests. Thus, Fairclough's AWK method allows the research to uncover how the state uses halal discourse to frame KIHIC as a symbol of progress, efficiency, and religiosity, while simultaneously exploring how this discourse can reproduce or renegotiate the power structures that exist within the contemporary halal political economy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Commodification of Religious Symbols as Political-Economic Trademarks

The phenomenon of the commodification of religion in the Banten Provincial Government's official discourse regarding the development of the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) illustrates how language is not merely a medium of communication but also an ideological instrument that transforms religious values into economic commodities. At the textual level, the linguistic strategies implemented by the government demonstrate a systematic effort to emphasize the inherent relationship between religiosity and modern capitalism (Muhaimin, 2023). The

discourse on the KIHIC is not only structured to provide information but also designed to shape public perceptions of the symbiotic relationship between Islam, modernity, and economic progress. This aligns with the view that text is a space for the production of meaning, fraught with power relations and interests (Fairclough, 1995).

In the context of government discourse, religion is no longer positioned solely as a guide to spiritual life, but has transformed into a symbolic asset that can be capitalized on (Kotanko & Winchester, 2025). This transformation is evident in the intense and consistent use of religious lexicon in press releases, social media posts, and KIHIC promotional materials. In other words, religious language serves not to explain theological values, but rather as a branding tool that reinforces Banten's image as the epicenter of the national halal economy. This form of commodification of religious symbols forms the foundation for a critical analysis of KIHIC discourse.

One of the main characteristics of the commodification of religion in official government discourse can be seen through the repetitive use of religious vocabulary such as "halal," "sharia," "blessing," "modern," and "global." Through this repetition, the government builds a cognitive association that the halal economy is not only part of Islamic tradition but also a gateway to progress and modernity. The word "halal" in many press releases, for example, serves not only as a marker of adherence to Islamic jurisprudence but also as a sign of product quality and a guarantee of business ethics capable of competing in the international market. This use demonstrates what Fischer (2016) calls "halal framing," the process by which the concept of halal is positioned as a global language for ethical consumption and a marketing strategy (Fischer, 2016).

The word "sharia," which once had normative legal connotations, is now paired with economic terms such as "investment," "global market," "added value," or "industrial growth." In a press release titled KIHIC: Gateway to the Global Halal Market, the phrase "sharia values" appears alongside the words "trillions of rupiah" and "mass labor absorption." This pairing is not coincidental, but rather a linguistic strategy that transforms the concept of sharia into economic language that sells trust and efficiency (A. F. Ali et al., 2023). Thus, sharia no longer functions as a moral guide, but as a value proposition that increases the economic attractiveness of the KIHIC area (Heryanto, 2016).

Similarly, the word "blessing," with its spiritual dimension, is now placed in the context of economic growth. For example, in several posts on the official Instagram account @bantenprov, the phrase "blessing of halal development" is used to describe increased investment realization. The word "blessing" is reduced to a metaphor for material success stemming from the harmony between religion and capital, transforming spirituality into a motivational force for market logic (Yolles, 2024).

Equally important, the repeated use of the words "modern" and "global" serves as a form of aesthetic and technological legitimacy for the KIHIC project. In government discourse, modernity is not pitted against religiosity; rather, modernity is presented as the essence of implementing sharia values within the context of industrialization (J. A. Ali, 2022). The use of the terms "modern halal," "global-standard halal industrial zone," or "digital halal infrastructure" illustrates how the government seeks to create a narrative that Islam is compatible with technological progress and international market integration (Islam et al., 2024). Thus, the pairing of the words "religious" and "economic" is not merely descriptive but creates new meanings that place religion within the orbit of global capitalism (Monticelli & Frantzen, 2025).

The shift in meaning from theological to commodity value is evident in how these religious terms function. For example, the term "halal," in government texts, is no longer understood as an ethical principle governing production and consumption, but rather as a competitive label that increases the exchange value of a product or industrial area. Within the logic of the market, the halal label becomes a guarantee of quality and a branding mechanism that adds value to a product (Mustapha & Mustapha, 2025). In other words, religious use value shifts to exchange value within the global market structure (Fischer, 2016). This is the essence of the commodification of religious symbols, constructed through lexical strategies within the official narrative of the Banten government.

In addition to the use of religious lexicon, metaphors play a significant role in shaping the ideological image of KIHIC. The Banten Provincial Government uses symbolically powerful metaphors such as "the mecca of the halal industry," "the national halal epicenter," or "the gateway to the global halal market." These metaphors are not merely rhetorical devices to embellish language, but rather discursive strategies to instill Banten's superior position in Indonesia's halal economic landscape (Isti'annah et al., 2025).

The metaphor of "qibla," for example, has a strong theological resonance in Islamic vocabulary. The qibla is the sacred direction that serves as the spiritual axis of Muslims' orientation during prayer. By using this term to describe the KIHIC, the government is creating an association that Banten is the new center of orientation for the

national halal economy. The ideological effect is to normalize claims of leadership and dominance: if Banten is the "qibla," then other regions are implicitly in a position to follow or adapt. This metaphor thus not only constructs an image but also reproduces an imaginary hierarchical structure (Isti'annah et al., 2025).

The metaphor of "epicenter" has modern resonance—usually used in geological or economic contexts—but when paired with the term "halal industry," it conveys the idea that KIHIC is a powerhouse stimulating the growth of the national halal sector. This metaphor blends scientific and religious language, with "epicenter" reflecting the power and dynamics of modernity, while "halal" represents spirituality (Jamil, 2025). The union of these two elements strengthens KIHIC's legitimacy as an entity that is not only religious, but also modern and economically influential.

Similarly, the metaphor of "gateway to the global halal market" implicitly depicts KIHIC as Indonesia's primary gateway to the international halal industry. Within this framework, the government positions KIHIC as strategic infrastructure that determines the future of the national economy. The "gate" metaphor creates the image that KIHIC is the starting point for the journey toward global progress, and that the government is its guardian and driving force (Sans Zurita, 2023).

These metaphors are not neutral language choices. They reflect an attempt to build symbolic legitimacy for the KIHIC and demonstrate how the government uses rhetoric to expand its authority. The use of sacred metaphors ("qibla") and technocratic metaphors ("epicenter," "global gateway") demonstrates the integration of two types of power: spiritual and technocratic (Fairclough, 1995). Both work simultaneously to shape public opinion to accept that the KIHIC is not only a religious and modern project, but also an inevitable part of Indonesia's journey toward becoming a global halal economic hub (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Beyond lexicon and metaphor, branding strategies are a crucial instrument in the commodification of religious symbols (Afolabi et al., 2024). In the government narrative, religion—particularly the halal symbol—is reduced to a "halal guarantee," a quality assurance explicitly projected to attract domestic and global investors. This kind of branding transforms religion into an entity that can be promoted, marketed, and exchanged within market mechanisms (Kok, 2021).

KIHIC is positioned as an entity with a dual identity: religious and industrial. The official narrative states that the area not only meets strict halal standards but also offers modern infrastructure, strategic logistical access, and investment certainty. This combination creates the construct that KIHIC is a complex product combining "religion + capital + modernity." In the logic of branding, religion becomes a symbolic raw material that adds value to market competitiveness (Liang et al., 2022). This branding aligns with Sandikci's (2011) argument about how the global halal industry shapes an "Islamic consumer culture" that positions religion as a lifestyle and a symbol of prestige (Sandikci, 2011).

The reification of religion occurs when religious concepts such as halal and sharia are treated as material objects with market value. In the KIHIC discourse, religion no longer stands as a normative concept governing the ethics of production and distribution, but rather as a commodity aesthetically packaged to create market differentiation (Sandikci, 2021). Halal becomes a label, not a comprehensive ethical practice. When religion becomes a trademark, moral values are stripped from their social context and replaced by market values (Zaman, 2019).

On the other hand, KIHIC branding also creates the image of the government as a modern and innovative actor capable of harmoniously reconciling religion and economics. The government portrays itself as the primary driver of the halal economy and the moral guardian behind the implementation of sharia in the industry (Afifi Ab Halim et al., 2022). Throughout these textual strategies, it is clear that the commodification of religious symbols was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but rather the result of carefully designed linguistic and rhetorical strategies (Gramsci, 1971).

Throughout these textual strategies, it is clear that the commodification of religious symbols was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but rather the result of carefully designed linguistic and rhetorical strategies (Olsen, 2003). Religious lexicon, symbolic metaphors, and branding techniques worked simultaneously to construct a narrative that KIHIC was an inherently religious, progressive, and necessary political-economic project. The language used by the government not only described reality but also created a new reality that positioned religion as an instrument of modern capitalism. This is the essence of the politics of religious commodification in the KIHIC development discourse: religion is reproduced, represented, and marketed as a symbolic commodity that can distribute political legitimacy while simultaneously encouraging capital accumulation (Izberk-Bilgin & Belk, 2025).

The State as Guardian of Morals and Motor of Capital: Representation of Dual Power

The discourse on the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) is not merely about industry or the economy; it is a complex representation of how the state organizes itself as both a moral authority and a driving force of new capitalism (EFE, 2023). Throughout the official texts of the Banten Provincial Government, the state is portrayed as an actor with two primary mandates: first, maintaining the sanctity, purity, and legality of halal; second, promoting economic growth through investment, infrastructure development, and efficient licensing. These two roles do not exist in isolation, but rather form a dual power structure in which morality and capital support each other to generate stronger legitimacy (Fairclough, 2010). Through their integration, the state regulates not only economic behavior but also how society understands religiosity in the public sphere.

In most press releases, the government consistently positions itself as the guardian of public morality through a halal narrative that refers to the regulatory obligations stipulated in the Halal Product Assurance Law (UU JPH). By referring to the state's mandate to ensure that products circulating in the market are clearly halal, the state claims moral legitimacy to lead the sharia economic agenda (Lofland, 2024). This narrative is evident when the government portrays the KIHIC as a bastion of purity and consumer trust. In other words, the state positions itself as a guardian of purity, as if without state intervention, the public sphere would be filled with moral uncertainty and ethical chaos (Simnes, 2024).

The use of religious morality in state discourse serves not only as a statement of values but also as a mechanism of political legitimacy. When the state states that the development of KIHIC is part of its "moral responsibility to ensure the economic well-being of the people," the narrative is not neutral. It leverages religious authority to strengthen political authority (Cheong, 2021). In fact, this discourse creates the impression that the state is not merely an administrative regulator but also an actor with spiritual obligations (Bozonelos, 2021). This constitutes a form of moralization of governance, where public policy is couched as an ethical imperative, rather than a political decision subject to debate (Driessen, 2014).

Thus, religion functions as discursive armor, a shield of discourse that makes state decisions appear unchallengeable (Yang & Li, 2021). The positioning of the state as the protector of halal sanctity creates a specific symbolic relationship: the state holds a superior position, while society and business actors are in a position of "need to be guided." This relationship demonstrates the pattern of pastoral power as described by Foucault, namely power that regulates the moral life of society through regulative instruments disguised as virtue (Foucault, 1977). In other words, the halal discourse makes the state not only the holder of administrative power but also the moral leader who determines the boundaries of holiness and impurity in the public sphere.

When religious morality is used as a source of policy legitimacy, the state gains what Bourdieu (1991) calls symbolic capital: authority that arises not from coercion, but from societal acceptance of state-produced religious symbols (Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, halal morality becomes a political instrument, sufficient to expand the government's legitimacy as a protector of divine values—even though, at the same time, the economic policies it pursues contain a strong capitalist agenda (Rahman et al., 2024).

Behind the moral narrative, the state also appears as a strongly pro-capital actor. Official texts from the Banten Provincial Government strongly emphasize infrastructure development, accelerated licensing, and ease of investment as "halal development mandates." By highlighting bureaucratic efficiency, logistical facilities, ease of halal certification, and investment incentives, the state conveys the message that KIHIC is not merely a spiritual space, but a special economic zone designed to attract as much capital as possible (Su & Lim, 2025).

At this point, the line between public service and investment interests becomes blurred. The state portrays infrastructure provision and investment facilitation as moral obligations, while in fact, they are at the heart of the neoliberal capitalist agenda, which emphasizes efficiency-based competitiveness and deregulation (Kunzlik, 2013). This blurring results in what Jessop (2016) calls strategic selectivity, a selection of discourses that allows the state to present pro-business policies as in the public interest (Jessop, 2016).

Furthermore, the use of terms such as "halal industrial ecosystem," "global supply chain," and "investment-ready cluster" demonstrates that KIHIC is not merely aimed at local producers, but is open to the interests of international capital. Thus, halal morality, initially positioned as a cultural and spiritual value, has transformed into an economic magnet that attracts global investors (Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016). This narrative is consistent with Foucault's (2008) thesis on neoliberal governmentality, where the state does not withdraw from the economic arena but instead actively creates ideal conditions for capital accumulation (Foucault, 2008).

In the context of KIHIC, the state acts as a broker, bridging capital interests with religious narratives. The state provides facilities, investors bring capital, and religion provides moral legitimacy. This collaboration creates a strategic alliance between symbolic and economic power that reinforces each other (Bai & Nam, 2023). In other words, the state plays a dual role: that of moral authority and that of capital facilitator. This role creates a dual legitimacy, where the state gains both public acceptance and investor trust (Mende, 2024).

The combination of moral and economic roles is not natural; it is shaped by hegemonic strategies designed to ensure that society accepts existing power relations without direct coercion (T. Good, 2022). Mengikuti Gramsci (1971), hegemony operates when the state is able to induce certain social classes or groups to accept values that are essentially elite interests but presented as the "common good." In the discourse of the KIHIC, religion is used as a medium to soften the logic of capitalism, making economic expansion appear as a noble moral mission (Gramsci, 1971).

The use of religious symbols as a persuasive strategy results in what Fairclough (1995) calls ideological embedding, which is the implantation of certain values in the text so that it appears natural and uninvolved (Fairclough, 1995). When the official narrative states that KIHIC "brings blessings to the people of Banten" or "ensures halal purity for the community," the public is led to accept that industrialization is the most correct and ethical path to take. However, these ethical postulates are discursive constructs, not objective facts.

This hegemonic strategy also relies on normalization, where the state promotes the idea that the integration of religion and capitalism is natural, modern, and even necessary (Snider & Bittle, 2022). Narratives such as "halal is the future of global industry" or "Banten as the world's halal epicenter" position a preference for capital as not incompatible with religiosity but rather a new form of purity. This is a form of discursive fusion between two previously separate realms: religious morality and market logic (Kalan, 2023).

In this way, the state expands its power without resorting to physical coercion. There is no violence or repression. Instead, there is symbolic persuasion that leverages public religious beliefs. This is a form of hegemonic governance, where power operates through consent, not coercion (Stiglitz, 2002). Religion is used as a tool to smooth the agenda of capital, while capital provides resources to strengthen the state's political position (Saal, 2021).

The integration of moral power and capital power gives rise to a new form of dual legitimacy. When the state presents itself as a protector of halal values, it gains moral legitimacy. When the state presents itself as an investment facilitator, it gains economic legitimacy (Wang et al., 2022). These two sources of legitimacy operate simultaneously, creating power that is more difficult to challenge because it has both symbolic and material foundations.

Ultimately, the discourse on KIHIC illustrates how the state constructs itself as a dual actor: a moral pastor and a manager of capital. Through language, symbols, and rhetoric, the state regulates not only economic transactions but also society's religious interpretations. Herein lies the most strategic power of the commodification of religion: it allows the state to expand political influence while deepening integration with global capital structures (Jong, 2025). Thus, KIHIC is not simply an industrial project, but a hegemonic apparatus that unites religion and capital within a structured framework of legitimacy.

The Production of Muslim Consumer Subjects: Religious Obedience in Market Logic

The halal discourse produced by the Banten Provincial Government in promoting the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) not only shapes the image of the state, the economy, or modernity, but also produces new ways of interpreting Muslim identity and piety. Through language, diction, metaphors, and specific emphases in press releases and social media, the government indirectly creates the figure of the "ideal Muslim" according to Islamic capitalism: an individual whose piety is reduced to consumer choices that adhere to formalistic halal standards. In this context, the halal discourse no longer functions as a broad moral principle, but rather as a regime of truth that determines how a Muslim should behave, act, and feel (Foucault, 1980). Thus, KIHIC becomes an arena for the production of subjects, where religion is reframed to align with market logic.

In official government texts, a good Muslim is one who chooses halal products, supports the halal industry, and embodies obedience through standardized consumption. This narrative is evident through recurring phrases such as "ensuring the blessings of public consumption," "the halal lifestyle of the millennial generation," or "modern piety through industrial halal products." In this way, the state leads society to identify piety with halal consumption, a form of piety manifested through consumer behavior, rather than broader social, ecological, or spiritual dimensions (Vanany et al., 2020).

This logic aligns with the thesis of Islamic capitalism, where religion is re-manufactured to fit market mechanisms. Islamic capitalism does not reject consumption, but rather packages it as an expression of faith (Rudnyckyj, 2019). When the government emphasizes the importance of "choosing the right halal products," society is directed to become entrepreneurial believers: subjects who interpret faith through efficient and rational consumer calculations. Thus, piety is reduced to individual acts that can be counted, measured, and certified.

Furthermore, this narrative creates moral pressure, where Muslims who do not purchase halal-certified products are potentially viewed as less pious. In other words, the halal discourse creates a new, consumerist moral hierarchy. In Fairclough's (1995) framework, this is a form of discursive recontextualization in which theological values are transferred to the realm of the market economy (Fairclough, 1995). Piety is no longer linked to social solidarity, justice, or ecological struggle—but to the ability to purchase industrial halal products.

In classical Islamic tradition, piety encompasses horizontal relationships (*habl min al-nas*), ecological concern, and the just management of wealth (Al-Ghazali, 2011). However, in the KIH discourse, a shift occurs from social piety to individual consumption piety. This shift aligns with what Bauman (2007) calls liquid morality, where religious identity is fragmented into consumerist expressions that are fleeting, superficial, and easily replaced by market dynamics (Bauman & Magatti, 2007). Through this construction, the halal discourse helps shape a Muslim subject compatible with the modern economy: devout, obedient, and consumptive. Identity is no longer fought for, but purchased.

Behind the grand narrative of halal sanctity and economic growth, there is something interesting: there is virtually no discussion of labor issues, economic distribution, inequality, or environmental sustainability in any government text. There is no discussion of how KIH treats factory workers, how profits are distributed, how the certification process affects small MSMEs, or how industrial areas impact the local environment. In other words, this halal discourse avoids structural issues that are actually an integral part of the *maqasid sharia* (Auda, 2008).

This demonstrates a significant reduction in the meaning of *maqasid*. Al-Ghazali (2011) emphasized that the core of *sharia* lies in protecting life, intellect, lineage, religion, and property based on the principle of justice (Al-Ghazali, 2011). However, in the KIH discourse, *sharia* is reduced to halal certification alone, as if religiousness is complete only by ensuring the halalness of the final product. This is a form of normative flattening, namely the simplification of norms to conform to market mechanisms (Mandel & De Mink, 2016).

For example, the government narrative describes KIH as an "industrial zone that brings blessings to the community," but there is no discussion of whether workers receive a living wage, whether female workers are protected, or how occupational safety standards are enforced. This absence is no accident; it represents a form of ideological silencing in which elements that could potentially challenge the interests of capital are deliberately omitted (Fairclough, 2010).

One of the most significant discourse strategies in government texts is the narrative convergence between economic profit and *Sharia* compliance. The government consistently uses phrases such as "halal brings sustainable profits," "Sharia investment guarantees economic blessings," or "Sharia compliance means global competitiveness." Thus, market logic is normalized as part of religious logic (Alotaibi et al., 2022).

This normalization creates the impression that the more a company adheres to halal standards, the greater its profits. This relationship is not merely economic, but theological: *Sharia* compliance = profit; non-compliance = loss. This narrative produces what is known as a false consciousness of piety, a false sense of piety constructed not through spirituality or ethical striving, but through market calculations (Maham & Bhatti, 2019).

The fusion of religion with capital accumulation creates a new form of religious capitalism, in which industry, not the clergy, determines society's standards of practical piety (Osella & Rudnyckyj, 2017). This shifts moral authority from the theological to the economic realm. As a result, piety is no longer the result of inner reflection or social struggle, but rather the consumption of halal products produced by large industries.

The government's narrative about KIH clearly demonstrates this. Religion is presented not as an ethic of liberation or a critique of injustice, but as an instrumental ethic: a tool to enhance business image and market competitiveness (Sandıkcı, 2011). Thus, the halal discourse is no longer a liberating ideology challenging social injustice, but an instrument of capitalist profit-making.

This shift demonstrates how religion has lost its critical function. In early Islamic tradition, religion served to challenge structural injustice, defend oppressed groups, and create an inclusive social order (Safi, 2009). However, in the KIH discourse, religion has been transformed into a brand value that supports industrial

expansion. This represents a reversal of ideology, where the ideology of liberation has become a tool for legitimizing the dominant economic structure.

Through this normalization, market logic subtly penetrates society's spiritual space. Society is not asked to submit directly to the state or capital, but is led to believe that the market is a natural part of religiosity. This integration produces a form of soft domination, where power operates without the need for violence or repression, but through the internalization of seemingly religious meanings (Foucault, 1988). Thus, halal discourse produces obedient, consumerist Muslim subjects who accept the market as a religious medium. This is the most subtle, yet most effective, form of domination.

Theoretical Synthesis: Discourse, Power, and the Political Economy of Halal

The theoretical synthesis in this study aims to summarize how state-produced halal discourse operates through linguistic mechanisms, institutional practices, and social structures to consolidate power while advancing specific political economic projects. Using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, this synthesis demonstrates that halal narratives in state media platforms are not only descriptive but also performative—they shape social reality, produce particular subjects, and instill obedience through language (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, this synthesis analysis demonstrates how the state, religion, and capital operate not as separate entities but as mutually reinforcing regimes of truth (Foucault, 1978).

At the textual level, this research finds that language is not merely a means of communication, but an instrument of power production that serves to normalize the commodification of religion. Lexicon choices such as "halal," "sharia," "blessing," and "global competitiveness" are not neutral terms; they construct a horizon of meaning that simultaneously combines religious and capitalist values. Fairclough (2003) calls this process textual technologization, the controlled use of language to produce specific social effects (Fairclough, 2003). The religious lexicon in halal discourse borrows the moral authority of religion to reinforce economic messages, so that halal is constructed not only as a spiritual obligation but also as a commodity with high exchange value in the global market (Mukherjee, 2020).

Metaphors such as "global halal mecca," "international halal gateway," or "epicenter of the sharia economy" demonstrate an ideational framing strategy that positions Indonesia—particularly Banten—as the center of moral and economic gravity. This metaphor operates in two directions: first, it offers a vision of Indonesia's symbolic superiority within the global halal ecosystem; second, it minimizes potential criticism by framing economic interests in sacred religious language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Thus, at the textual level, we see how language is utilized to connect three main dimensions: religious sanctity, development urgency, and state legitimacy.

At the level of discourse practice, the government acts as the primary producer of halal narratives through press releases, social media, and official publications. This discourse production process reflects what Fairclough (1995) calls institutional discourse engineering, namely the systematic efforts of institutions to control the flow of meaning circulating in the public sphere (Fairclough, 1995). The distribution of halal discourse is carried out through state-owned media, which have formal authority and significant amplification capacity, so that the narrative received by the public is no longer spontaneous, but rather the result of structured institutional filtering.

In this context, language is positioned as a tool for managing perceptions. State media not only report information about the KIHG project or halal regulations, but also format that information to align with the state's strategic interests. This process aligns with the concept of mediatised governance, which explains how the state uses media to direct public opinion, shape preferences, and produce consensus through standardized communication strategies (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). The government's halal discourse leads the public to view halal consumption as a form of religious patriotism and participation in national economic development.

At the level of social practice, halal discourse serves as an instrument linking state interests, capitalist power, and religious authority within a single ideological configuration. Fairclough (2010) states that discourse is not only a reflection of social reality but also a regulatory mechanism that shapes power structures (Fairclough, 2010). In the context of Indonesia's halal economy, the discourse produced by the government integrates two primary sources of legitimacy: moral legitimacy through religion and rational legitimacy through narratives of economic growth.

By involving religious authorities in halal projects, the state strengthens the moral mandate, allowing every economic policy to be understood as a continuation of religious injunctions. At the same time, the inclusion of the industrial sector, investors, and business actors in the framing of the halal discourse builds an economic

mandate, stating that religious commitment can be realized through participation in profitable economic activities. The integration of these two mandates creates a new power structure in which religion, capital, and the state no longer stand alone but instead legitimize each other within a single hegemonic narrative.

Previous studies on the halal economy in Indonesia have tended to focus on the creative industry, consumer consumption patterns, or the role of certification bodies (Hasan et al., 2022). However, studies on how the state produces halal discourse for political economic purposes through its official media are still very limited. This research addresses this gap by highlighting the linguistic and discursive dimensions that shape the relationship between religion and the state in the context of halal capitalism.

By demonstrating how the state uses religious language to frame economic development, this study broadens the understanding of the commodification of religion not only as a market activity but as a political project orchestrated through institutional means. This adds to the literature on Islam and modernity, analysis of identity politics, and the political economy of post-authoritarian development in Indonesia (Fealy, 2008).

Another contribution of this research is the concept of the triangulation of power: state, religion, and capital. This study shows that in the context of Indonesia's halal economy, these three elements are not contradictory but work synergistically to generate dual legitimacy. The state appropriates religious symbols to secure public moral support; religion is positioned as an undeniable source of legitimacy; and capital provides the material structures and economic incentives that expand the reach of halal discourse.

This configuration is reminiscent of what Foucault (1978) called governmentality, namely the way the state produces ideal citizens—in this context, Muslim halal consumers—through moral regulation and market incentives. Meanwhile, Gramsci (1971) helped explain how the state produces hegemonic consent through the intersection of religious moral authority and capitalist economic needs (Gramsci, 1971). Thus, this study provides a new theoretical foundation for understanding how halal economic politics is not merely technocratic, but rather a hegemonic project that combines symbolic and material power.

This theoretical synthesis demonstrates that the state-produced halal discourse functions as a technology of power capable of uniting religious symbols, economic strategies, and political interests within a single hegemonic narrative. The integration of Fairclough's three levels of analysis enables a comprehensive mapping of how language constructs a new social reality—one in which piety is reduced to consumption, religion is reduced to a commodity, and the state emerges as both a moral leader and a driving force of capital. Thus, this research reinforces the understanding that the halal economy is not merely a certification issue, but a complex political terrain that reveals the intricate relationships between discourse, power, and capital in contemporary Muslim societies.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the halal discourse produced by the Banten Provincial Government through press releases, social media, and KIHIC promotional materials is not merely a development communication strategy, but rather a practice of power that operates through language, institutions, and broader political-economic structures. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, this research successfully unravels how religion is represented, produced, and deployed as a means of legitimising the state's economic and political agendas. In general, the research findings can be summarized in three main points. First, from a linguistic strategy perspective, halal discourse utilizes religious lexicon and spiritual metaphors to normalize economic agendas. The repeated use of terms like "halal," "sharia," "blessing," "modern," and "global" creates the image that the KIHIC project is both a moral movement and a development movement. The juxtaposition of religious language with technocratic language creates a commodification of religious symbols, where spiritual values are repurposed into commodities that promise political and economic benefits. In this case, religion is no longer simply interpreted theologically but is represented as a strategic, marketable asset.

Second, this study found that the state presents itself through two facets of power: as the guardian of public morality and as the engine of capital development. On the one hand, the state positions itself as the guardian of halal sanctity, in line with the regulatory narrative of the Halal Product Management Law. However, on the other hand, the state also plays a role as a promoter of investment and economic growth through infrastructure guarantees, ease of licensing, and claims of efficiency in the halal industry. These two forms of power are then combined through a hegemonic strategy: religion is used as a persuasive tool to smooth investment agendas, while capital gains moral legitimacy through symbols of state-controlled piety. Thus, the

halal discourse establishes a dual legitimacy, encompassing both moral legitimacy and economic legitimacy. Third, this research demonstrates that halal discourse constructs a specific type of social subject: the Muslim consumer, whose piety is reduced to market preferences. Through the “halal lifestyle” campaign, religious obligations are reduced to individual consumption choices. This narrative obscures structural issues such as worker welfare, environmental sustainability, and economic distribution, thus shifting the maqasid of sharia from the goal of substantive justice to merely fulfilling certification procedures. The normalization of the “Sharia compliance = economic profit” relationship creates a false sense of piety that is synonymous with participation in the halal industry, rather than with social transformation.

Fourth, theoretically, this research emphasizes the new relationship between the state, religion, and capital in the context of Indonesia's halal economy. Religion no longer serves as a source of moral criticism against injustice, but is instead harnessed as an instrument to promote economic development and political stability. The state uses halal discourse as a form of governmentality, a subtle mechanism for directing societal actions and orientations through morality, regulation, and market logic. Thus, the halal economy is not merely an economic domain, but a political arena of discourse that produces new subjects, power relations, and structures of meaning in the public sphere. Overall, this study contributes to the literature on the commodification of religion, state hegemony, and the political economy of halal by demonstrating that halal discourse is a complex, structured, and ideologically charged exercise of power. These findings present opportunities for further research on how communities negotiate, reject, or adapt halal discourse in everyday life, as well as how the halal industry will reshape the relationship between religion and the state in the future.

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